DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 213 099 EA 014 398

TITLE	How to Keep Students in School...and Make Them Want to Be There.
INSTITUTION	California School Boards Association, Sacramento.
REPORT NO	CSBA-3
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	91p.; Prepared by the 1980-81 CSBA Task Force on Attendance, Absenteeism, Truancy, and Dropouts.
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Attendance; Board of Education Policy; Demonstration Programs; Dropout Attitudes; *Dropout Prevention; *Dropout Programs; *Dropouts; Elementary Secondary Education; State Surveys; *Truancy
IDENTIFIERS	*California; Lancaster Elementary School District CA; Pajaro Valley Unified School District CA; Riverside Unified School District CA

ABSTRACT

Based on surveys of 125 school trustees and administrators and 186 student dropouts and truants in California, this guidebook examines the causes of student attendance problems, discusses guidelines and ideas for programs to combat these problems, and presents exemplary programs in three California school districts. A profile of a hypothetical truant, together with results of the student survey, suggest the factors and processes that result in attendance problems. Part 1 of the booklet then presents basic guidelines for school board actions regarding dropouts and truants, notes recent California legislation on the problem, and recommends that boards review their current practices before adopting policies and setting goals. Part 2 suggests ways to carry out board policies, including program ideas from California districts for informing and involving the community, streamlining attendance, reporting, developing staff skills, providing incentives and guidance to students, offering alternatives, planning for special problems, and using school attendance review boards. In Part 3, case studies are presented of effective attendance programs in California's Riverside Unified School District, Lancaster Elementary School District, and Pajaro Valley Unified School District. An appendix provides the responses to the student survey. (RW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

California School Boards Association | Number 3

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

JAN PARROTT

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED213099

EA 014 398

how to

How to Keep Students In School

Prepared by the 1980-81 CSBA Task Force On Attendance, Absenteeism, Truancy, & Dropouts

3

Acknowledgements

This book is the work of CSBA's 1980-81 Task Force on Attendance, Absenteeism, Truancy and Dropouts.

Task Force Members

Dan Towler, Chairperson

Members
Lucille Colin
Richard Ferraro
Philip Hammer
Dorothy Rohlfing
Jewell Shelton

Adjunct Members
Jule Anderson
Carol Kalamaras
Janet Mishodek
Eugene Shirley, Executive Committee Liaison

Karen Norton, Staff Consultant

The task force extends special thanks to those who reviewed the manuscript or otherwise provided technical assistance:

Bob Bennett, Field Representative, Field Management Services Bureau, State Department of Education.
Linda Bond, Consultant, Assembly Subcommittee on Educational Reform
Lynn Hartzler, Consultant, Curriculum and Support Services Division, State Department of Education.
Lee Lundberg, Supervisor, Attendance and Support Services, San Leandro Unified School District.
John Mustafa, 1980-81 president, Los Angeles Citywide Student Affairs Council.
Lillie Wilson, Consultant, Division of Administrative Services — Attendance and Welfare, Los Angeles County Office of Education.

CSBA Communications Unit
Jan Parrott, Editor
Jeanne DeWitt, Graphic production

Published by the California School Boards Association
Sacramento, California, November 1981.

Table of Contents

v Acknowledgements
viii Forword. Why Improve Attendance?
1 Introduction. Behind This Book
3 **Part 1. Basic Guidelines For Board Action**
5 Chapter 1. Basic Caveats
6 Chapter 2. Recent Attendance Legislation
8 Chapter 3. Initial Questions
10 Chapter 4. The First Step: Setting Policy and Goals
15 **Part 2. Program Ideas**
17 Chapter 1. Informing the Community
19 Chapter 2. Streamlining Attendance Reporting
23 Chapter 3. Developing Staff
26 Chapter 4. Improving Guidance
35 Chapter 5. Providing Incentives
40 Chapter 6. Offering Alternatives
49 Chapter 7. Planning For Special Problems and Hard Core Truants
55 Chapter 8. Involving the Community
64 Chapter 9. Using Review Boards and Teams
72 **Part 3. Case Studies**
73 Chapter 1. Using School Improvement for Attendance Improvement (Riverside USD)
76 Chapter 2. An Elementary Emphasis That Works (Lancaster USD)
79 Chapter 3. Pajaro Promises Prevention
81 Appendix. Responses To the Task Force's Student Survey
85 Bibliography

Foreword: Why Improve Attendance?

Ask a school board member to name two major concerns of school management today, and he or she might respond: "Money and declining enrollment." But ask the same person about what his or her district is doing to alleviate truancy and dropout problems, and the answer could easily be: "Nothing." The reasons? "We can't afford to take revenues away from the general-education program when there are more pressing needs." Or, "We can't afford to spend time on a few problem students when we have to be concerned about the quality of education for *all* students."

An interesting comment, indeed, considering that an attendance improvement program can help to alleviate all three of what the board member identified as "more pressing" needs — raising revenues, coping with declining enrollment, and improving the quality of education.

The costs of non-attendance are staggering in several ways. Los Angeles Unified School District loses more than $34 million annually to "other" (unexcused) absence; moreover, this represents the loss of nearly four million pupil days of instruction each year. This may at least partially explain the difficulties that some students have in meeting course and district proficiency requirements.

As overwhelming as the data are for unexcused absences, they fail to show the number of students who are not in class because of illness (or alleged illness) and a variety of "legitimate" reasons. There seem to be no statistics on how much of a teacher's individual attention and/or classroom time is consumed by the review of material, repetition of lessons, make-up assignments and other requirements related to pupil absence. Many teachers will personally tell you, however, that even "the excused absence" is a significant problem.

Even more significant is the correlation between regular school attendance and the success of children in school. Conversely, a major result of school absenteeism can be academic failure; and this cycle, once started, may produce feelings of inferiority, frustration and disinterest in pupils, and in turn lead to their eventual dropping out of school. In many cases, it will lead to hostile acts such as vandalism against the school — or worse yet, violence against other students or staff members.

If, then, the solutions to attendance problems can also produce

solutions for many other common school problems — i.e., the lack of financial resources, lagging student achievement, violence and vandalism — why is it that school boards, staffs and communities are not devoting greater attention to attendance-motivating plans?

There is a story about a college student who was asked by one of his professors, "Which is worse, ignorance or apathy?" The student replied, "I don't know, and I don't care!" We assume that everyone cares about this critical issue — and we must ensure that educators, education leaders and others gain the knowledge necessary to address it.

The Story of a Boy Named Joe

This profile of a hypothetical truant was written in 1980 by Irene Burkey, then-director of pupil personnel services for the Lancaster Elementary School District. We include it here so that the reader might better understand the common origins of attendance problems. In adopting any attendance program, be sure to consider its potential impact on the *individual* absentee, truant and dropout (like "Joe").

Joe's student record reads "academically low functioning — has had difficulty in school for years." A psychological report reads, "Joe has a general non-caring attitude, he is often defiant to authority figures. He has moved several times in the last few years." The school secretary says that Joe's parents never attended parent conferences and get angry when they're contacted at work. The counselor says Joe usually associates with other kids who get into trouble, that he has few interests, is not involved in any extra curricular activities, is usually depressed. His school history indicates that he missed 43 days in kindergarten. His attendance has been more irregular each succeeding year. And now Joe is 14 and in the 7th grade. We all know the Joe's; angry, unhappy students with

Drawing by Chris Diermann, Gunn High School, Palo Alto USD.

no coping skills, unable to deal with their world. He's a failure at 14. The messages that he has received from his world tell him that he's bad and dumb. Teachers scold him for being absent, for incomplete work, for "raising Cain" in the classroom. His parents consider him more trouble than he's worth. His grades are lousy and every time he turns around, somebody else is ready to accuse him of something.

But where did this all start? He got the message early that school wasn't important. He used to go with mom to visit grandma.

If mom came home late the night before, she overslept, he overslept, he didn't get to school. But so what? Kindergarten isn't that important. When Dad wasn't working, he got to stay home and watch T.V. with Dad. And so it went. . . .

But then school got hard. Mrs. Jones in the first grade was pretty patient, but the work got hard. He didn't understand the assignments after he missed a few days.

By the time Joe reached the third grade, it was easy to fake headaches and upset stomachs. And now we're 14 — angry and frustrated and unhappy; a prime candidate for truancy, and after that what?

Ninety-five percent of those youngsters that are serious juvenile offenders — burglars, shoplifters, vandals, etc. — begin their careers as truants. A hundred years ago, the rural economy provided a cushion for students having trouble in school, for whatever reason. They could and did drop out of school to work on the farm or in dad's shop. Today, when the pressure becomes too great, and the "Joe's" escape, they escape to somewhere and they are doing something. By the time they are 14, very few stay at home when they're ditching school. These students are on the streets, burglarizing, shoplifting, affecting the lives of everyone.

Every day that youngster is out of school seriously affects the quality of education available for the regular attenders since state monies are provided for children who are in school.

We need also to consider the school secretary, the principal or vice-principal and the teacher who spent countless hours contacting, conferencing, tracking, pleading, referring and planning. Time that could be spent planning for the students who *are* in school.

So eventually certain things are bound to happen. All of the people working with the "Joe's" become impatient, angry, or just plain give up. In our exasperation we spank, suspend, retain, refer to probation, perhaps to the district attorney. We've taken this poor miserable student and we've spanked him!

All of this is the extreme. However, each student who exhibits the *symptom* of truancy has one or more of the above problems.

Introduction: Behind This Book

In 1980-81, the California School Boards Association Delegate Assembly established a task force on Attendance, Absenteeism, Truancy and Dropouts (AATD), thus making those issues a CSBA priority. The task force's charge was two-fold: to examine the possible causes of attendance problems, and to locate exemplary programs that address those causes. To carry out its charges, the Task Force

1. Surveyed 125 school trustees and administrators about the attendance efforts their districts are already undertaking.

2. Drafted a separate instrument to survey those who are most affected by truancy and dropout problems — the truants and dropouts themselves. Student leaders in seven communities were called on to read the questionnaire to two groups, dropouts and students with reputations for poor attendance. A total of 186 young people agreed to be surveyed by their peers.

The students' responses clearly verified results of past studies: that the reasons for truancy and dropout tendencies can be the same ones that cause other educational problems — drug abuse, apathy and inadequate home-to-school communication among them. A feeling of hopelessness seemed to pervade many of the truants and dropouts' comments.

The Student Sampling

The task force survey of young people included 145 students with attendance problems and 41 dropouts. Of the total 186 respondents, the average age was 15.72 years. Ninety-seven were male and 79 female (the interviewers didn't note the gender in 10 cases). Some 143 were single, five married and two previously married. Eighty-one lived with both parents. Another 42 lived with their mothers, 10 with their fathers; and 35, with neither parent. The vast majority (173) identified English as their primary language. Some 106 were Caucasian; 26, Hispanic; 13, black; and one, Chinese.

Interestingly enough, 127 of the 145 poor attenders said they *want* to graduate. A somewhat smaller majority (109) *plan* to graduate, which means that some students who want to finish school don't know whether they'll be able to do so. Ten said they'd need to find a job before their scheduled graduation date and one commented that he'd fallen too far behind in his work to ever catch up.

Among the 41 dropouts, 20 said they felt they'd have a better life if they finished high school. But about the same number (22) indicated that they weren't sorry for having dropped out of school. Their reasons for leaving were frequently similar to those for the poor attenders' lack of optimism about graduating: the need to get a job, marriage plans or the feeling that poor academic performance would prevent it.

And the No. 1 reason for both groups' abandonment of their schools? It was pure "boredom" or disinterest. One commented that what occurred there simply didn't apply to her future; another said it isn't worth getting up for in the mornings. When asked to name five things they like (or liked) about school, a number of participating young people couldn't think of more than one or two — or any at all.

The positive things that *were* mentioned included certain teachers or counselors, coed classes, sports, vocational education, a small-school environment, friendly students, food, special classes, physical education, extra-curricular activities, pep rallies and assemblies, music groups, and tennis courts, swimming pools and other facilities. (Ironically, several of those offerings — particularly sports, outside activities and special classes — have been budget-cutting targets since the passage of Proposition 13.)

Then there was a series of more negative reasons for students' attending school. It was described as "easy to ditch," "close to places to go," "good for smoking." One student liked the fact that "everybody parties" and another said "time to go home" is what he liked best about his school experience. Still others said their favorite thing about school is the availability of drugs.

Drugs, drinking, delinquency and disinterest are certainly problems in themselves. By striving to eliminate them, your board of education can curb truancy problems — and improve the overall climate and quality of your schools at the same time. You may indeed discover that the expenditure for positive attendance and related programs is far outweighed by the results, even before the dollar gain is considered.

Chapter 1.
Basic Caveats

Since the root cause for truancy varies from student to student, school to school and district to district, the CSBA task force cannot offer a universal prescription for success. The uniqueness of each school system notwithstanding, however, a few basic caveats apply in any situation:

1. The problem shouldn't be approached as one affecting high schools or junior high schools only. Studies have shown time and time again that the poor attenders at the elementary level are likely to become the poor attenders at the high school level, unless they receive special attention early on.

2. Don't feel that you have to undertake this alone. When a youngster is allowed to simply drop from the rolls (especially, on the grounds that he or she is disruptive), there may be a great cost to society in terms of non-productivity and crime. Other public and private agencies may be willing the help keep that from happening.

3. Efforts should focus partly on making the young person feel attendance is important. To quote one student responding to the survey: "If my teacher doesn't care, why should I?" This cry was repeated also with respect to parents and counselors.

4. School boards shouldn't restrict their projects to traditional attendance improvement approaches. By adding or improving electives, vocational education, career education, extra-curricular activities and sports, a school may prompt its students to become more enthusiastic — and thus increase their desire to be there.

5. Keep in mind that truants and former dropouts need short-term as well as long-term incentives to get back on the right track.

6. Understand the law and be aware of developments in the field. Reading this book is a start toward doing just that.

Chapter 2.
Recent Attendance Legislation

In September 1980, the governor signed AB 3269 by Assemblyman Gary Hart; the bill sets forth new attendance accounting requirements, establishes a pilot program, and requires boards to establish district attendance policies.

One new requirement in the bill is that every district disclose its rates of *actual* pupil attendance each year. In the past, districts generally have reported only their "average daily attendance" figures, which fail to show the percentage of students who truly go to class on a given day. That's because the ADA figures count illness and other excused absences just as if the student were actually in attendance.

Respondents to the CSBA task force survey of school districts were divided on the value of actual attendance disclosure. Some felt that school districts would merely juggle their attendance statistics to make them appear better to their communities than they are. Others said it would hurt support for the schools. On the positive side, some said *sincere* attendance disclosure would focus media and community attention on the issue.

The task force believes that the outcomes will be positive if school boards reveal the data and at the same time announce a comprehensive attendance effort.

A second important thrust under AB 3269 was to establish a three-year pilot program involving about 30 of the state's school districts. The districts (which have been chosen) will be awarded an increase in their revenue limits for each two percent increase in their actual attendance. The increase will be allocated half to the districts' general funds, and over half to either the pilot site's staff development or School Improvement Program.

The State Department of Education is required to disseminate information to local districts on attendance improvement programs, which presumably will include the programs that were proven successful in the pilot study.

In addition to identifying successul attendance programs, the long-term purpose of the "pilot" is to evaluate the possibility of moving all state school funding from an ADA to actual attendance basis.

State legislators have been concerned about local attendance accounting procedures for some time. In 1979, Auditor General Thomas Hayes warned that actual attendance is much lower than ADA, and recommended that there be "a comprehensive plan for addressing problems in administering the state's attendance laws and attendance accounting requirements."

His report was still on lawmaker's minds when they adopted AB 3269. In it is a requirement that school districts' annual fiscal audits include an audit of local attendance accounting procedures.

The bill also establishes the Legislature's *intent** that school districts not include in their ADA counts students who attended for less than a minimum day. In other words, ADA credit wouldn't be given for a student who showed up for the first two periods (until roll was taken), and then left for the remainder of the day. This provision requires strict accounting of period absences.

In addition, AB 3269

- Requires that categorical staff development programs include a component to help school personnel improve attendance.
- Says that advisory committees and councils for the School Improvement Program, bilingual education and special education must address attendance issues, particularly in raising parental awareness.
- Calls on school boards to adopt policies that provide for notifying parents about pupil absences; increasing pupil and parental awareness of the importance of good attendance; auditing and accountability of pupil attendance; staff development; alternative learning programs; and joint efforts with law enforcement agencies.
- Revises School Attendance Review Board procedures, as outlined in Part II, Chapter 8.
- Strengthens sanctions against parents who willfully and continually violate compulsory attendance laws.

---

*Statements of legislative intent are *not* the same as mandates.

Chapter 3.
Initial Questions

A school board can begin to focus on attendance problems by reviewing its district's current practices and priorities. Among the questions to be asked:

- Do we have clearly articulated attendance policies, procedures and goals?
- Are parents quickly notified about their children's absences?
- Do we give our students sufficient reasons for wanting to be in school?
- Do our counselors actually "counsel"?
- Do we have sufficient alternatives for students who don't wear the "average" label?
- Do our administrators, teachers and classified employees understand the importance of and their responsibilities for attendance?
- Do we make the best possible use of our community in achieving maximum attendance?
- Is our School Attendance Review Board — and our participation in it — as effective as possible?
- Do we have mechanisms for dealing with students' special problems, such as drug abuse and chronic illness?

If the answer to most of these questions is "yes," chances are that your board has already begun to deal with attendance problems. If the answer is "no" (or "uncertain"), your board should review Part II of this book for ideas in each area of inadequacy.

To evaluate which ideas would work in your schools, you might have student leaders conduct a survey of truants and dropouts in your own community. An adaptation of the CSBA task force survey (Appendix) can be used, especially if it includes references to local situations — such as the presence of a closed campus or the elimination of a particular program.

Cautions About Implementing a Student Survey

- *Be careful in your choice of young people to administer the survey instrument.* They don't have to be student government officers; they can be any responsible students capable of eliciting an honest response and taking the job seriously. If you use students in psychology or other social science classes, be sure that the assignment is carried out by volunteers rather than those who feel it was forced on them.

  For its own survey, the CSBA task force called on student leadership classes; selected continuation and opportunity high school students; and student congress, student affairs and student advisory committees.

- *Be sure that the students are properly trained.* They should read the questions, but allow the "interviewee" to supply the answer. They should understand the importance of keeping all responses confidential.

- *The participating truants and dropouts must realize that the survey is being conducted to improve the schools — not to "nab" them for personal wrongdoing.* In CSBA's own student survey, many of the respondents expressed a distrust of administrators and school board members.

Once the results of the survey are compiled under a teacher or administrator's direction, you can begin to determine the program components that might bring your students back to school and make them want to be there.

Chapter 4. The First Step: Setting Policy and Goals

The first step toward resolution of attendance problems is to adopt board policy and set goals.

Although the adoption of policies to provide for student learning is undeniably a major function of school boards, only 44 percent of the 125 school representatives responding to the CSBA task force survey said their boards had adopted policies to improve attendance — an important component of such learning.

Leadership at the board level will show your staffs, parents, students and community members that good attendance is a priority within your district.

Review Current Practices

Before you adopt an attendance policy, you should review current practices at your district's various sites. In addition to establishing a link between a low absence rate and student achievement, a well-written attendance policy can help your district to resolve major inconsistencies between its various schools. CSBA's task force survey revealed discrepancies in the following areas:

- *Grades* — Some respondents said at least one of their schools allows attendance performance to be figured into their students' grades. However, one attorney general's opinion (58 Ops AG 575) holds that course *credit* cannot be denied or reduced because of poor attendance. Poor attendance can keep a student from meeting the "minimum academic standards" for a course, and thus (in the attorney general's opinion) can be cause for reducing his or her grade. A district-wide policy and legal review in this area may well be merited in your district.
- *Signature verification* — The CSBA survey also revealed that

many districts lack a uniform procedure for verifying that parental signatures on notes aren't forged. Fifty-three of 125 said they contact parents when staff is suspicious of a particular signature; 29 said they do it occasionally, and three more contact parents on a random basis. Only nine called parents daily with each absence. The others didn't answer the question, which may indicate a lack of understanding at the district level about how verification is handled.

- *Personnel* — Education Code 48240 requires that every district have a "supervisor of attendance and such assistant supervisors of attendance as may be necessary to supervise the attendance of pupils in the district or county." Has your board of education appointed such staff?
- *Dropouts* — Because it's not specifically stated in the Education Code, the definition of "dropout" varied from district to district. Samples are: "a person who discontinues school before age 18" and "a school-age student not pursuing an educational program or alternative." Five of six districts did not use any particular definition at all.

It'll be hard for your district to "recover" dropouts unless its staff knows whom that category includes. Under the Education Code, a dropout is a person between six and 18 who has not graduated; is not enrolled in a regular, continuation or other alternative school program; and doesn't meet any of the exemptions contained in Sections 48200 and 48400.

Tailor Policies

Attendance policies should go beyond a mere restatement of the law. Although they should be consistent with that law, they should also reflect the general philosophy of the board and community. For instance, your own policies on attendance might make a commitment to

- Total school staff involvement.
- Staff development.
- Prompt parental notification and involvement.
- Wide use of SARB as an intervention tool.
- Joint effort with law enforcement agencies.
- Ongoing curriculum review to ensure that courses are relevant to all youth.
- Alternative methods of earning academic credits, such as independent study.
- Increased emphasis on the elementary grades.
- Provisions for follow-up when a student is identified as having attendance problems.

What They Contain: Sample Policy

Where school attendance policies *have* been adopted, they frequently refer to the importance of home-to-school communication as vital to improvement. Another popular reference is to the connection between good attendance and pupil achievement. Including both aspects, the policy of the San Diego Unified School District board is reprinted below:

"The Board of Education:

1. Believes that to provide quality of educational opportunities for all students, it is imperative that the parent, student, and school work closely in supporting regular daily attendance.

2. Affirms the close relationship between a student's attendance history and school achievement.

3. Expects students to attend school regularly, expects parents to promote their child's attendance and to notify the school if a student must be absent, and expects the school to notify parents if a student fails to attend class.

4. Intends to enforce this policy within existing city, state, and federal laws — specifically the Education Code of the State of California, Sections 48200 and 48400, which require that every child in California between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school. Students between the ages of 16 and 18 must attend at least part time or until graduation from high school.

5. Assigns to district staff — teachers, counselors, principals, and other district personnel — the responsibility for implementing and enforcing this policy with consistency and fairness.

6. Supports school administrators and staff in carrying out this policy."

Set Goals

When your district's philosophy has been outlined in policy, it's time to set measurable goals. Keep the following in mind while setting goals:

1. Be realistic. Remember to allow some start-up time for the various program components. You might want to set up a graduated scale for attendance improvement over a three- or five-year period.

2. In one study, the state auditor general found that actual student attendance averaged about 83.8 percent of enrollment; "excused" absence is said to be about five to six percent of enrollment, typically. If your district's record is already superior to

Photo: *Students who join a club have a 90% chance of completing high school. (John W. North High, Riverside USD. Story on page 73.)*

these figures, don't be afraid to go beyond them. Why not aim for a 0.5 percent unexcused absence rate?

3. Don't just address unexcused absence. Your excused absence rate really *can* be reduced without forcing young people to leave their sickbeds. We all know there are cases where parents allow their children to stay home for "mental health days" or for visiting with Aunt Maggie. A good parent awareness program will make parents realize the importance of their children attending school all day, every day.

4. Consider setting an overall goal with respect to *actual* attendance. While there's no statewide fiscal incentive at this time for districts to turn so-called "excused" absences into classroom-learning-days, you should recognize the benefits for improved academic achievement and more teacher-student contact time. Under the pilot program in AB 3269, mentioned earlier, districts are rewarded for every two percent increase in actual attendance; your board might establish this as a target, even if it's not participating in the pilot program.

Such goals are becoming increasingly important, now that the state is examining the *possibility* of converting all school district state aid payments to an actual-attendance basis.

Once your board has adopted attendance policies and goals, you'll have to identify programs that might help you to get there. Part II of this book contains a variety of sample approaches; Part III describes in detail how some districts are using several of these approaches in unison.

While adopting a plan to meet your district's own particular needs, don't "shy away" from innovative approaches for financial reasons. The following chapters note many ways to finance projects, including contributions from other public agencies; contributions from business through "Adopt-a-School" and other methods; Title IV-C funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and existing sources, such as School Improvement Program (SIP) funds.

Caution

In reviewing the attendance-improvement programs of other districts, be aware that county counsels' opinions may differ with respect to what's allowed under the law. Be sure to consult your legal counsel before designing or replicating *any* attendance policy or plan.

Part 2.
Program Ideas

Chapter 1.
Informing the Community

Disseminating District Policies

Your attendance policies and goals won't be effective unless you communicate them to parents and students. In various districts around the state, dissemination vehicles have included student handbooks, presentations to community groups, news media reports, and the usual parent notification channels, such as school newsletters.

The San Diego Unified School District has put its policy (page 13) into a concise brochure mailed to parents. It calls implementation a "shared responsibility," and goes on to explain the individual duties of teachers, parents, students and principals. A few examples:

- Students will report on time to every class every day unless legally excused; make up missed assignments; and obtain re-admission approval.
- Parents will promote good attendance, understand district procedures; and advise the school whenever their children are to be absent.
- Teachers will give the principal a daily list of each class absence; review attendance rules regularly with students; and communicate and work cooperatively with parents and appropriate staff members to alleviate attendance problems.
- Principals will establish and publicize site-level attendance regulations; promote good communications between teachers and other staff; ensure that reporting procedures are clear and followed consistently; and evaluate the school's progress.

And how is progress to be evaluated?

School personnel told the CSBA task force again and again that it's impossible to address attendance problems — or, to even determine the extent of attendance problems — unless there is an accurate accounting system. Those reporting the best success had developed systems allowing prompt parent notification and the tracking of individual student attendance patterns.

Keeping Parents Informed

Of the 125 districts in the CSBA Survey, less than half reported unexcused absences to parents daily. Others report to parents at a set time such as within three days, weekly, every two weeks, six weeks and quarterly. Still others reported to parents only after a third or sixth absence — when a student is legally a "truant."

Even for students with unexcused *full-day* absences, less than half the districts inform parents on a daily basis. About 10 percent report to parents within a set time period, ranging from every two or three days to quarterly. Four respondents said they notify parents only after the third such absence.

Waiting until after a child becomes a "truant" or "habitual truant" is hardly the best way to enlist parental intervention. AB 3269 urges districts to notify parents on the same day that each absence occurs.

Additional attendance staff may be required to increase phone-calling or letter-writing to students' parents. But it's worth the effort to evaluate the possibilities for your district. Not only is it a first step toward attendance improvement, but a new state Supreme Court ruling lends a particular importance to strict attendance supervision. The court held that districts might be subject to liability for injuries suffered by a student while he or she is off-campus cutting class.

What the Students Say

The task force's survey of students shows that students will indeed change their behavior with more school-to-home contact. In 81 cases, the students said they personally would come to school more if parents were called every time they "cut school" (fifty-one said the calling wouldn't have that effect and 13 didn't know how they would react). When the response to the concept was negative, reasons given included parent ineffectiveness in convincing the child to attend school. "They couldn't make me go" and "You're an adult in high school" were typical responses in this category.

The students thought letters to parents would be less effective than phone calls. Sixty-eight said they'd come to school more often if their parents received a letter whenever they had an unexcused absence; 62 said they would not and 12 didn't know. The latter group said they'd simply remove the letters from the mailbox; that such letters "would only make me mad"; or that *nothing* could be done to make them attend school.

Chapter 2. Streamlining Attendance Reporting

About half the responding districts have already found ways to streamline attendance reporting procedures — mostly through a new generation of computers. These allow for a faster and more indepth look at attendance at costs far lower than they were just a few years ago. The possibilities for this include:

- Contracts with other entities for computerized attendance services.
- Micro-computer services at the school site.
- District-level computer services.

Two Districts' Experience with Computerized Accounting

In Los Angeles County, the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District has been attempting to curb a "severe absence and tardy problem" since 1967. In 1980-81, it implemented a district-office-based computer system that records attendance for both accounting and counseling purposes. The system was developed jointly with a software house, which computer specialist Al Coleman says the district found to be a great advantage.

Since 1980-81 was the system's first year of full implementation, the district hasn't yet determined whether it's cost-effective. But one sample high school was able to reduce the number of absent students per day by 100 over the previous year in a seven- to eight-week test period. And the schools have nearly a 100 percent record

for verifying all-day absences, meaning that the district is sure to collect ADA monies for those that qualify.

The system starts up on Monday mornings, when each teacher receives for each class a new roster designed for computer scanning. The teacher will fill in the appropriate "bubble" beside each student's name showing if the student was tardy or absent. The sheets are sent directly to the school attendance office, which produces a print-out with the absent students' names and the names, phone numbers and addresses of their parents. The same procedure is carried out each period. By the third period of the day, the attendance staff is ready to call parents and record whether the absence was excused, unexcused, etc. Updated at the day's end, the list is kept "active" for two additional days so the attendance staff can continue to verify pupil absences.

From this data, the computer produces a daily master absence list. Teachers can obtain a photo-reduced copy of it or review one that's kept in the faculty lounge. If they see a problem, they can personally notify the student's parents or call it to the attention of the principal or attendance staffers.

Other features of the computerized attendance system are as follows:

- On a weekly basis, a second list is prepared — showing individual pupil tallies for absences and tardies, dating back to the beginning of the semester. That also alerts staff to student problems.
- Staff can request an individual profile showing the exact dates and class periods that a student was absent or tardy over the entire year. This allows prompt responses to parents' requests for their children's attendance records. The attendance staff supplements the computer information by hand-maintaining student individual files with notes from parents and records of home calls.
- To ensure accuracy, a school can obtain separate print-outs indicating which teachers have supplied incomplete forms. Also a team of 10 teachers is assigned to help check the validity of reports.
- If a staff member thinks it's necessary, a computerized letter can be sent to a student's home with a two-week personal attendance summary.
- The individual data help the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) review attendance patterns (more on SARB in Chapter 8).
- Because there's built-in flexibility, the district office can determine the periods, days of the week, classes, etc. where most absences occur.
- All processing and report-printing is done at the school. The

district office uses that information to make regular runs of enrollment and ADA figures, so the site-level staff doesn't have to spend time calculating. And while attendance staff now devote more time to calling parents, they save time by not having to compile absence lists themselves.

If you're considering the implementation of such a system in your district, the NLMUSD's data-processing director says visitors to Norwalk-La Mirada are always welcome. Give advance notice to Al Coleman, Norwalk-La Mirada USD, 12820 S. Pioneer Blvd., Norwalk, CA 90650 (213)868-0431.

Another district reporting success with a computer-accounting system is Colton Joint Unified SD in San Bernardino County. It produces individual attendance profiles weekly for sixth through 12th graders and monthly for kindergarten through fifth-grade students. Also printed weekly for grades 6-12 is a "total periods absence report," listing students in descending order from those with the most to the least periods absent over the semester. (A similar record is issued monthly for K-5 students' attendance, dating back to the beginning of the year.) This enables schools to reward students who have had good attendance; it also quickly alerts the district's attendance coordinator and counselors to potential problems.

The full-time attendance coordinator is assisted by a team of part-time "consultants," all former teachers or administrators on an early retirement program. They visit school at least once a week to get the names of absentees' parents, who would then receive phone or personal calls. On days when school isn't in session, parent conferences are arranged between the students' teachers, the attendance coordinator and, at times, the principal.

When such counseling is ineffective, a student will be referred to the SARB, assigned to an alternative educational program or linked with a community agency. In every case, the computer-produced student profile is used. The data also enables the district to

- Identify two-week periods where ordinarily high-absence students missed one or no days of school. Their families would then receive a letter with a "gold star" from the attendance coordinator.
- Have staff verify secondary students' absences by phoning parents during evening and early morning hours.
- Give elementary students a football card (from a stock supplied by Kiwanis International) for each week of perfect attendance.

Like other districts, Colton found that its accounting program

worked best when coupled with other approaches, such as counseling, positive incentives, and in-service training of staff by the attendance coordinator (see subsequent chapters).

The plan of the district school with probably the best attendance record — Colton Junior High — is said to have another essential ingredient. According to principal Dale Chilson, CJH managed to reduce it absence rate from 12 percent to about 9 percent in 1973-74 with the advent of computerized accounting. In 1975-76, the rate dropped to five percent and has since remained at about that level. Chilson says the improvement resulted from a get-tough academic policy, requiring students to meet basic competency standards before promotion to the 9th grade. And the connection to attendance? The principal, teachers and other staff members have continually stressed its importance in gaining skill levels necessary for promotion.

Students' passage into the 9th grade wasn't automatic, either; in the program's first year, Colton retained 33 percent of its 8th-grade class. Remedial efforts are accompanied by letters and calls to parents, coaching by tutors and parent conferences, "all stressing the need for participation all the time," says Chilson.

For further information, call Dale Chilson at Colton Junior High (714)824-4231 or the Colton district superintendent at (714)824-4216.

Student Attendance Cards

Short of a computer system, your schools may be able to adopt their own means of tracking individual attendance patterns. In San Jose, the Yerba Buena High School keeps a 5"x8" card on which student's absences, tardies, suspensions or perfect attendance are recorded each day. The cards supply a "quick picture of a student's attendance pattern," as well as certification for good-attendance awards and identification of chronic truants for home letters and visits. In addition, attendance staffers maintain a file for each student with notes from parents and admittance cards.

Maintenance of such files in your schools will help to authenticate parent signatures and excused absences at the time of the attendance audits mandated yearly under AB 3269.

For a sample of Yerba Buena's card, write to assistant principal Tony Butcher at 1855 Lucretia Avenue, San Jose, CA 95122 (408)279-1400.

Chapter 3. Developing Staff

As board members and superintendents, you want your district schools to be places where your students want to be, including students in the hard-to-teach-and-reach group. You want all your students to believe that school is the primary arena for learning things worth knowing, and you want them to enjoy going to school to learn these things.

This message of learning-as-the-key won't come across unless it's communicated by those who have the most contact with students — their teachers, classified employees and site-level administrators. With so many competing factors, it's hardly surprising that staff members don't spend more time giving personalized attention to every youth, but the need came across strongly in the CSBA school district survey. Seventy percent said members must change their attitudes about convincing students to stay in school; a consistent plea was made for administrators and other personnel to become more "caring" and "involved" with those students.

Involve Your Staff

Although your staffs are under time pressures and morale problems, they will be willing to focus on attendance and program improvement if they feel *part of and supportive of* the effort. It's important to involve them from the start:

- Ask for staff input in developing policies.
- Once your board adopts policies and goals for attendance improvement, have principals meet with both certificated and classified staff to explain this new priority. Individual board members and the superintendent may also attend these sessions to emphasize their commitment to the program.
- In any subsequent site-level planning for attendance, make sure that teachers and other employees are involved from the start.
- Remember that if an improvement plan adds to employees' working hours (or changes evalution procedures), the Educational Employment Relations Act requires approval from their collective bargaining representative. Don't allow an innovative plan to be placed in jeopardy by an unfair labor practice charge.
- Try to balance increases in staff responsibility by relieving some of the load in other areas. For example, one school added three secretaries for its teachers after assigning to those teachers a new, counseling-type role (see Chapter 4).

- Consider awarding a stipend to teachers who take on such a role. Exerting influence on potential dropouts and truants might in fact be considered a type of "coaching" responsibility.
- Encourage teachers to include attendance-related motivators in the curriculum. At Ruth Grimes Elementary School in Colton, the health coordinator suggested that teachers stress the importance of attendance during roll-taking and instruction; explain what will be happening in class on the following day, so that students don't want to miss it; and ask for three cheers on every day there's perfect attendance. Sample assignments were for students to write poems or letters to a pen pal, friend or relative as to why they like to come to school; find as many words as possible by using the letters in "perfect attendance"; and write short stories about what a teacher might do to make students want to come to school.

Teacher Training

Teachers will be more likely to devote extra energy to attendance improvement if they understand the link between attendance and achievement. The Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study — sponsored by the National Institute of Education — shows that increases in the amount of time spent on-task *will* improve pupil performance. Local studies have been done as well: in the Houston Independent School District, administrators prepared a chart showing how poor attenders are more likely than good attenders to score poorly on basic skills tests. It's a relationship that's well-documented, but not necessarily well-explained.

In the task force survey of school districts, about 36 percent said their staffs currently receive in-service training on attendance matters. But the comments accompanying the questionnaires indicate that training in many places may be limited to attendance accounting subjects. While that's important, staff members may be more diligent about such accounting if they fully understand why it's needed.

Make the attendance training ongoing, with opportunities for role-playing and practice. Ask the staff to make suggestions for topics. Some that might be covered are

- Assertive discipline
- Classroom management techniques
- Ways of informing parents about absences
- School Attendance Review Board procedures
- Compulsory education laws
- Communication and conflict management skills
- Means of identifying and assisting "high-risk" students

Another valid topic for in-service training is the connection between the attendance behavior of teachers and that of their students. As one survey respondent put it: "If students notice that the staff takes long weekends (and) is absent on Mondays and Fridays, then they will emulate." Moreover, the teacher must demonstrate a belief that the subject matter is worth knowing about. When a staff member is busy doing his or her "thing" rather than focusing on the class, the students will begin to notice and may lower their own interest and standards as a result. Be sure that teachers are recognized for good attendance and conscientiousness.

Your county office of education may be able to help arrange inservice training. And to bolster your staff's new understanding, your district could allow released time for teachers and others to attend a SARB hearing.

Teacher Remediation

Improving teacher classroom performance through inservice training can have positive effects on reducing student "cuts." The Santa Clara USD developed a model called "Teacher Remediation." When a teacher is identified as falling below regular evaluation standards, the district assigns from one to three current and/or retired teachers to serve as consultants. The team observes the teacher's classroom performance, and then recommends modifications and perhaps inservice training. After 60 days, the teacher is evaluated again, and the same consultants offer an opinion on whether the remediation was effective.

Teachers have given an "excellent" response to the program and fully participated in training sessions on how to help others in their profession, according to Assistant Superintendent Nicholas Gervase. He says that of 20 teachers referred for remediation, 10 left the system voluntarily and the rest are now "doing a great job!"

For information contact Nicholas Gervase at P.O. Box 397, SCUSD, Santa Clara, California 95052, (408)985-6012.

Assume that your staff wants to grow professionally. Some employees may have developed positive-reinforcement techniques of their own which they'd like to share with others. Many teachers will welcome additional training on how to reach students who are in danger of dropping out because they "simply don't believe school is getting them anywhere." Some teachers will be willing to assume a counseling-type approach, regardless of whether a stipend is awarded.

Chapter 4.
Improving Guidance

"Counselors do not counsel. They are too busy to help the kids."
A student participating in the CSBA Survey

Up to 60 percent of a typical counselor's time is spent counting credits, arranging transfers, scheduling classes and carrying out other administrative/clerical duties. The magnitude of attendance problems alone may seem overwhelming. The counselor or dean with 100 "cut slips" on his or her desk won't be able to spend much time uncovering the root causes. Few districts have anyone to fill the vacuum; with the demise of the homeroom, teachers may no longer consider guidance and counseling as necessary components of their occupation.

Your board can address the problem by providing for

1. A policy delineating the counselor's major role as counseling (not lunch room supervision, substitute teaching, etc).
2. An examination of possible personnel alternatives (peer counselors, volunteers, etc.) to supplement that role.

1. Policy and the Counselor's Role

Your district's guidance policy might specify that counselor's are to

- Supply students with information concerning graduation, including proficiency and credit requirement.
- Help students to identify a possible career path, and direct them toward the courses and higher education they will need for it.
- Advise parents on means of alleviating their children's academic and adjustment problems.
- Suggest involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- Recommend available community resources to meet individual student and family needs.
- Contribute information on student needs to help improve the educational plan of the school and district.

Naturally, a counselor with an assignment of 600 students won't be able to do all this for everyone. But you can improve his or her ability to provide comprehensive guidance by exploring options to remove paperwork burdens. You might consider hiring a clerk to

assist with scheduling and course-counting duties; the cost may be recouped if attendance and vandalism rates improve as a result of the counselor having more time to work directly with students.

Your board policy can require that each of your school sites has a plan for student guidance. These plans should ensure that

- Counselors are made accessible to students, perhaps by designating a daily "drop-in" period. The Pasadena USD includes information on counseling opportunities in its student handbook, and also in special brochures for young people and their parents.
- Students understand that what they tell a counselor will be confidential.
- The counselor has contacts with other agencies to which students can be referred for serious problems.
- Counselors refrain from sexual and racial stereotyping in course, extra-curricular, college and career advising, and aim for a positive approach.
- Students are involved in guidance planning and evaluation.
- Teachers and other employees understand the need for guidance and counseling, and how they might be integrated into the regular curriculum (for example, through social studies units on decision-making and public service careers).
- Guidance and counseling aren't just offered at the secondary level.
- Language and cultural barriers don't prevent a student from obtaining necessary advice or assistance.

2. Personnel Alternatives

Creative Staffing

In San Mateo County's Portola Valley, the Corte Madera School has an interesting administrative model. This 200-student, grade 6-8 site has no "principal"; its "management" consists of a counselor, site administrator, and administrative assistant. The latter employee handles student scheduling and attendance counting, freeing the counselor to work on improving the attitudes and motivation of students, teachers and parents. Other facets of the program are as follows:

- The counselor mediates and makes recommendations in disputes between teachers and students.
- An elective class teaches eighth-graders to become peer counselors.
- All sixth-graders take a class in self-awareness, communication skills, decision-making, career awareness, study skills, time manage-

ment and other techniques to get them off to a good start at the secondary level.

• A seventh-grade "social-skills" group is evenly divided between those who need to develop such skills and those who can serve as a model for them.

The Portola Valley model wouldn't work for every school. But it's an example of how "real" counseling can come about with a little creativity, even during a time of financial constraints.

For information, contact: Counselor Phil Shoff, Corte Madera Schools, 4575 Alpine Road, Portola Valley, CA 94044, (415)851-0409.

Teacher Advisors and Advocates

Several districts have developed mechanisms to directly promote staff involvement and caring. One is San Jose's Gunderson High School, whose program has been in effect since 1976. Its motto: "Everybody Is Someone Special."

Each certificated staff member — including the principal — is assigned approximately 23 students to "shepherd" through school over a three-year period. Each week, the "advisor" meets with his or her "advisees" to review their attendance records. Teachers also maintain folders on each student with academic records, test scores, and interest inventories. Through that and individual conversations, they'll help to steer toward the classes most in line with their chosen career path. "We are very much their friend, their advocate," says principal Ralph Sleight.

Each Wednesday after second period, a 15-minute time slot is reserved for attendance monitoring and other advising. Students also can meet with their advisors from 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. each day.

Based on feedback from their "advisees," teachers will recommend curriculum changes at the year's end.

In return for taking on their new duties, the teachers were given offices and file cabinets; three new secretaries were hired; and the number of telephones was doubled. Teachers like the program because they are treated as professionals, Sleight says. He also points out that teachers are faced with fewer discipline problems, since the students in their classes made an informed decision to be there.

For information, contact Ralph Sleight at 622 Gaundabert Lane, San Jose, CA 95136, (408)988-6340.

Downtown High School in San Francisco has gone a step further. Its teachers *are* counselors: All but one has a pupil services

credential; all devote three out of seven periods each day to counseling/preparation.

There is good reason for the school's emphasis on counseling. Many Downtown students were referred there because of attendance problems in other schools, where student/counselor ratios are as high as 1:600. At Downtown, it's 1:21.

Each teacher is assigned 21 students, who'll be given career advice and then assigned to classes accordingly. The advisors also write notes and make calls to the parents of absent youth. "When you know a student used to cut school four out of five days a week, and then you see them starting to go 97 percent of the time, you know something good's going on," comments principal Emil Anderson.

He says teachers enjoy the program as a "professional challenge," and treat students almost as if they were "clients." The advisers also see parents on a specially reserved conferencing day held in the middle and end of each semester. (Report cards at the school aren't mailed to students' homes; they're hand delivered at the conferences.) Attendance is good — a factor Anderson attributes to the letters of invitation, which emphasize the conferences' personalized quality and encourage parents to contact the principal directly if they don't hear from the child's adviser.

At graduation time, the students are presented with their diploma by their teacher adviser and shake hands with a school trustee.

The program has attracted visitors from as far away as West Africa and Japan. For information, contact Emil Anderson at 110 Bartlett Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415)565-9610.

If the thought of enacting such a program for *all* students overwhelms you, remember that it could be offered in a more limited fashion — just assisting those who have the most trouble with attendance, grades and self-esteem. High schools in the Pajaro USD assign "teacher advocates" to a selected group of incoming ninth-graders who were identified by junior high teachers as having potential problems.

Here again, CSBA's task force survey of students presents indicators of possible success. Eighty-two of 145 truants said they would come to school more often if a teacher or counselor there would give them special assistance. Sixteen of 41 dropouts said they would have stayed in school longer if that had been the case.

Eighty-six of the truants and 18 of the dropouts said their parents would care more about their schooling if they had "talked a lot" to

their teachers and counselors. Where the response was negative, it frequently was due to the parents' dislike of their children's teachers. Perhaps a "teacher adviser" or "teacher advocate' approach would build a more positive connection between home and school, as well as between school and child.

Peer Counseling

Good attendance can also come about through a direct relationship between a student and a concerned, trained peer. In the task force's survey of students, 66 of the 145 truants said they would come to school if encouraged to do so by a fellow student. Of the 41 dropouts, 12 said they might have stayed in school longer with peer-level encouragement; another seven weren't so sure. So, in the majority of cases, the young people were at least interested in the idea.

The Palo Alto USD has used peer counseling since 1971. Operated in six secondary and 15 elementary schools, it requires the employment of a half-time secretary and the equivalent of a full-time coordinator. The rest of the person-power is donated, which keeps the cost relatively minimal. PAUSD Coordinator Barbara Varenhorst says a one-site program could be run by a single staff member in an average of two periods per day.

The program is carried out through the

- Identification of a particular group of students in need of assistance, perhaps those with severe attendance problems. In Palo Alto, the targeted students were those isolated from the "social mainstream," either because they don't know how to make friends, are shy, are handicapped, or have a language problem.
- Recruitment of students to serve as their peer counselors. These leadership spots are open to any student willing to commit personal time to be trained. Students learn about the program through classroom visits from adult leaders and two or three currently assigned peer counselors. Palo Alto will select its adult leaders first, and then recruit students "up to the limit we can possibly handle." The emphasis is on quality rather than quantity.
- Training of the counselors. Palo Alto found that the "most powerful model" is after-school, once-a-week training for three months on a voluntary basis, without course credit or pay. (Some districts conduct it as an elective or summer school program instead.)

The small-group sessions teach young people communication skills and introductory counseling skills, counseling about specific concerns, and strategies and ethics of counseling.

• Selection of adult leaders. The district coordinator looks for staff and community members with skill in group dynamics and a record for success in working with adolescents. Those identified are not assured that they will be given a leadership spot after the training, nor do they promise the district that they will take one if it's offered. If they are chosen and accept, the adults will continue to meet with their training group at least once monthly to discuss problems and progress

• Assignments. Peer counselors are asked to complete a form stating the kinds of assignments they would be willing to take. A counselor will then arrange to meet with an identified target student and an adult. After that meeting, it is up to the young people to schedule future get-togethers — perhaps over lunch or dinner. The counseling group meets weekly to discuss problems and progress.

Training curriculum packages are available from Barbara Varenhorst at Special Services, PAUSD, 25 Churchill Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306. (415)855-8081, Ext. 2.

Peer counseling has taken on a still broader meaning at "Project Together" in Los Angeles' Washington High School.

The project was inspired by young people in a "Youth and Administration of Justice" class, who decided that students could — and should — do more to bring about solutions to the school's problems. They noted that peer pressure most often is conveyed in a negative manner, and that students have little opportunity to express positive leadership and influence.

The result was the development of a peer counseling program centered on the theme of "We Are Family." The project is built

Peer counseling is a strategy used in Project HOLD. (Pajaro Valley USD. Story on page 79.)

around a daily homeroom period, providing continuity in student-adult contact over a three-year period. Each homeroom class is asked to supply three volunteers to become peer counselors; these student volunteers can be past "troublemakers" as well as high academic achievers. The homeroom period provides a convenient time for the peer counselors to meet and to explain the various components of Project Together to other students.

Among those components are the following:

- School beautification — Students are involved in mural-painting, tree-planting, landscaping and clean-up activities.
- Community service — Students are assigned to various tasks as requested by neighborhood organizations, the city council, senior citizens' homes, and similar kinds of groups and institutions.
- Student justice — Students work with the administration to voice student concerns and encourage respect and enforcement of school policies.
- Student exchanges — Students are asked to visit other campuses and to welcome peer visitors to their own.
- Human relations — Events are scheduled to promote greater understanding and appreciation for differing racial, ethnic and cultural groups. This year, more than 300 students from 17 high schools attended Washington's Martin Luther King Day celebration.
- Educational counseling — Trained students are allowed to share knowledge of study skills, graduation requirements, scholarships, college admissions, etc.
- Vocational counseling — Informed students share materials on careers and career requirements.
- Tutoring — Washington students help others learn at their own and area elementary schools.
- School development — Students meet with staff to discuss curriculum, discipline and other policies.

In addition, project participants developed two auxiliary organizations: "Peer Parents" for the mothers, fathers and guardians of peer counselors; and "Peer Partners" for adults and students from other schools who support the concepts of student involvement and responsibility.

In a gesture of administrative support, the peer counselors were provided with an office in the main school building. All project participants received a card with the following words inscribed in English and Spanish: "I pledge to work to improve myself, my school, and my community."

The program so impressed legislators that several of Washington's peer counselors were invited to speak at a state Senate hearing

on character education. Project Together also has been honored with awards by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Southern California Social Science Association, and Mayor Tom Bradley's City Education Advisory Committee.

For information contact: Allan Kakassy, Social Studies Teacher and Homeroom/Peer Counseling Coordinator, Washington High School, 10860 S. Denker Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90064, (213)757-9281.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is another means of making high school students responsible for solving their own problems. Generally, it involves the training of natural student leaders (again, not only *academic* leaders) to facilitate communication among their peers. The "conflict managers" will make themselves available to resolve disputes between students, and perhaps between students and their teachers.

In Sacramento's Luther Burbank High School, the process works like this: Each period, two conflict managers are stationed in a room near the office of student dean Bob Sophia. When a problem arises on campus, the "conflictees" will go to the room and express their respective positions to the conflict managers; pre-explained ground rules outlaw pointing and abusive language during the discussion. The goal is for the managers to help bring about a mutual understanding and settlement — without fighting. (Assault cases go directly to the dean's office.)

The facilitators will later record the result and nature of the conflict ("fight," "rumor," etc.) on a case form to be forwarded to Sophia. To keep the matter confidential, no names are used on the form and no adults are present during the facilitation.

Sophia says the program has not only eased tensions on the campus as a whole, but made school much more meaningful to the facilitators, some of whom had behavior problems of their own prior to the program. Once they take on a leadership role, these students must remain good citizens and never skip class. Sophia cites the example of a girl who frequently "hung out" in an area beside the campus before becoming a facilitator. "Most of her friends were truant with her," Sophia says. "By taking that one person into conflict management, we've gotten 10 or 15 kids back in class."

For information contact Sophia at 3500 Florin Road, Sacramento, CA 95823, (916)454-8791.

Adult Tutors

Other school districts have tried to facilitate more positive communication and role-modeling by enlisting adult volunteers at the high school level. The Napa County Office of Education coordinates a program matching retirees with students in need of special assistance. On either a paid or volunteer basis, the senior citizens will counsel elementary or high school students over an extended period (where a salary is paid, the cost is estimated at $70 to $100 per student, per year; project participants report that one hour of volunteer time is typically generated for each three hours of "paid" time). Youngsters receive help with the basic skills, career education and/or self-esteem building.

Staff says the secondary students and seniors have been able to "relate with trust and confidence," and that this can be "enough of a steadying force . . . to enable the young men and women to settle down to the task of learning. Elementary school teachers who have tested the project claim that children who "own" a grandparent demonstrate an innate respect and affinity for the retired tutors and an eagerness to work with them, despite what may be a history of rebelliousness and discipline problems with teachers and traditional aides."

Implementation funds may come from Title IV-C, SIP or Title I revenues. A comprehensive, step-by-step operations manual is available to those adopting the program informally. Contact Project Director John Glaser, Napa County Office of Education, 4032 Maher Street, Napa, CA 94558, (707)224-3151.

Whether they emphasize adult-to-student or student-to-student contact, guidance alternatives can be a means of providing young people with a more personalized, caring environment in which to learn. The need for that environment is well-expressed by the 1979 book, *Lost in the Shuffle*, by the Open Road Citizen's Policy Center. In that book, urban students relate a severe lack of guidance to help them plan for their futures, get through school, understand themselves and relate to others. Consider what a lack of counseling cost one student:

> I've always really wanted to go to college to be a teacher, and worked real hard in high school — and then in the middle of my senior year we got this memo about taking a test. I went to the counselor to sign up for it and was told I hadn't taken the right classes. . . I was really mad. Why hadn't they told me there were certain classes I had to take back in my sophomore year? They just *assumed* I wouldn't want to go to college."

Chapter 5. Providing Incentives

Schools can use a vast array of incentives to encourage student attendance: award certificates, special privileges, even pay. The key factor is that the *student* view them as valuable. Praise can carry as much weight as a ticket to a football game. Don't send good-attendance certificates through the mail; give them personally to the student — at a school board meeting, assembly or parent conference. At some sites, principals will even take students with good attendance out to lunch or provide them with a special treat such as ice cream after school.

Your board can encourage such individual treatment through its policies. It also can adopt a plan to motivate school staff members (as well as students) to improve their school's attendance. For instance, the district can return to its sites a "bonus" from the revenue that's produced by a lower unexcused absence rate.

Some hints from school district staff members on how to make incentive programs work are as follows:

- Make sure the program is consistently implemented. If your means of recognizing individual students is through the school newspaper, and it isn't published during a particular month, find some other vehicle for recognizing winners.
- Variety will help to retain students' interest, but don't let them think a particular classmate is being favored through an award that's better than the others.
- Tailor awards to the different age groups: Pencils with catchy slogans may be a good incentive at the elementary level, but fail at the junior high level.
- High school students may respond to such incentives as professional baseball game tickets or trips to amusement parks. (One San Jose school treats all students with less than eight absences to a day at Marriott's Great America). But remember that students with severe attendance problems will also need weekly or other short-term incentives — which can be as simple as a phone call from the staff or a congratulatory session with the counselor.
- Don't neglect to undertake an incentive program just because of the time or cost: Your school's PTA, school site council or local civic groups may be willing to undertake an incentive program; local businesses may be willing to provide prizes.

Sample Programs

"*Paying* students 25 cents a day to attend school? Some

observers seemed to think of it as a unique — if not questionable — idea. With tongue-in-cheek, the *Sacramento Bee's* editors remarked "the cash incentive plan is loaded with possibilities. Students, for example, could learn the real worth of school attendance . . . by organizing unions and bargaining with the school board for a bigger piece of the action, not just a mere two bits a day."

But Robert Amparan, principal of San Diego's absence-plagued Memorial Junior High School, views the incentive plan as consisting of "rewards" rather than "payments." It was his idea to give Memorial's students a monthly "privilege card" which grows in value by 25 cents for each day of perfect attendance. Each punch hole on the card is worth 25 cents toward the price of yearbooks, gym clothes, shop materials, combination locks, field trips and other school-related activities. To offset the $5 monthly cost for each student, Amparan determined that the school would have to reduce its non-apportionment absences by 25 percent over the year (from 9.1 percent to 6.3 percent).

The plan became operational in October 1980. By February of 1981, it was a success: absences during the first semester had fallen by more than 16 percent. The school board extended the plan for the remainder of the fiscal year.

One advantage is that school-wide activities can be planned for students without concern that some students might be unable to afford the admission fee. And there is a side benefit: "As students participate more frequently in school-sponsored activities, they begin to like school — which increases their attendance, which increases their achievement, and therefore develops a cycle of positive growth," a program description points out.

Memorial Junior High is located at 2850 Logan Avenue, San Diego, CA 92113, (714) 232-0854.

Another San Diego School has implemented an incentive plan with similarly positive results. At Emerson Elementary School, the staff met with parents to discuss possible motivational methods for not only attendance but academic achievement. The result was a 51 percent reduction in unexcused absences, making the staff "confident that children are learning more, that their achievement is better, because they are in school, actively participating in the learning process," says principal Jonnie Hill.

Students at Emerson earn points or stars for various accomplishments, including being in their seats on time, completing homework and in-class assignments, perfect attendance and class participa-

tion. Points and stars are cumulative, and every few weeks can be traded for school supplies like pencils and paper.

All Emerson students also are eligible for special educational movies if they have had no unexcused absences during the previous four weeks. In addition, the primary and upper-grade classes with the best attendance total for each month receive an extra reward: banners to hang in their rooms. Each child in the two classes receives a coupon for a free hamburger donated by a local fast-food restaurant.

The teacher and aide in the classroom receive coupons for pizzas, "because they deserve a lot of the credit," resource teacher Joe Ippolito adds. Rewards also go to the parents of children with perfect attendance; for instance, in November of 1980, they were treated to an appreciation luncheon at the school, with food prepared by the teachers.

Parents are asked to notify the school when their children are absent and to stress the importance of regular school attendance. Teachers follow through in the classroom, leading discussions on the relationship between such attendance and success in school.

Project staff can be reached at Emerson School, 3510 Newton Avenue, San Diego, CA 92113, (714)234-2145.

Better attendance and academic achievement are joint goals in the Madrone Intermediate School in Sunnyvale. In the middle of

In the Lancaster USD, perpetual flags are passed each month to the school that has the best attendance. (Story on page 76.)

1979-80, the staff agreed to devote new time and energy toward changing the "loser" image of the low-economic-area school. Its resulting incentive plan is applied in combination with a new Saturday school for poor attenders and an assertive-discipline approach by all staff.

Between 1979-80 and 1980-81, unexcused absences dropped from about 800 to well under 200. According to principal Robert Lammers, this was accomplished by a "phenomenal" rise in test scores: for example, students gained two and a half years of language arts growth in just eight months.

The underlying change in school climate resulted partly from a plan to "pay" students to attend school, just as if it were a job. Students receive $60 in school-produced "money" for each day of good attendance. They're docked $20 if they forget any "tools of their trade": i.e., pencils, paper and books. A day of "sick leave" is allocated to all students each month, but if they have any unexcused absences or more than one excused absence, their Madrone "pay" is docked accordingly.

Every three weeks, the students use their accounts to bid on items in a school-sponsored auction. The auction items, which range from bicycles and watches to food coupons and dolls, were either donated by businesses or purchased from $3000 in community/business contributions. The students can also elect to use Madrone "dollars" for yearbooks or amusement park tickets, at a value rate of $1000 for each real dollar (16 days perfect attendance equals $1 in real money).

The most important requirement for the program is support from the entire staff, Lammers says. There is more work for teachers in that they have to be precise with attendance accounting and oversee the "dollar" transactions. To alleviate some of that burden, the project employed students in math basic-skills class as the "bankers," and had some of the accounting done by their counterparts in an elective computer class.

Lammers says Madrone even extends the positive-reinforcement concept to its Saturday morning school, where students make up work for suspension and unexcused absence days.

For information, contact Robert Lammers at 739 Morse Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94087, (408)739-2355.

A summary of some other existing programs follows:

1. Some School Attendance Review Boards — such as the one in Yuba County — award certificates of achievement to students

who have "shown exceptional achievement in improving attendance."

2. The Oakland Unified School District gives three report cards to each of its middle, junior and senior high school's students. These include separate marks for academic achievement, citizenship and attendance. Uniform criteria are set for all grades in all schools.

3. Many schools give "perfect attendance" awards, often with prizes donated by local businesses or community members. Variations on this theme include

- Complimentary letters from principals to parents.
- Periodic motivational announcements over the intercom system and in the school newspaper.
- Competition between classes (freshman, sophomore, etc.).
- Student-of-the-month awards for attendance.
- Special privileges (free admittance to athletic events or dances for the class with the highest attendance rate).
- Individual recognition through the media, in assemblies and on the pages of the school newspaper.
- Incorporation of attendance criteria into "good citizenship awards."
- Pictures of students who have good attendance posted on the office bulletin board.

4. Another possible incentive is a school breakfast program. Of the 125 school representatives responding to the task force survey, 65 said their districts operate such a program. Twenty-five felt that it could have or definitely has had a positive effect on attendance, particularly at the elementary level. (In high schools, some worried that students were coming for breakfast and then leaving.) "Breakfast *does* prepare the youngster to be receptive to learning, "one administrator pointed out.

5. Another approach is the staff incentive or site bonus plan, such as the one practiced in Redlands Unified SD in San Bernardino County. Last year, it returned to its schools 50 percent of the $32,000 in revenue that resulted from improved school attendance.

The Best Incentive

While bonuses, certificates, prizes and praise have been proven highly effective, a relevant educational program is the finest motivator of all. Advised one administrator responding to the CSBA survey: "Provide an educational opportunity for students where they will meet with success rather than failure. That is your best incentive tool."

Chapter 6. Offering Alternatives

CSBA's survey of students indicates that they are interested in educational options. Of the dropouts, 14 of 41 said they might have been able to graduate if allowed to work at home, rather than in class; of the truants, eighty-six of 145 said such a program would make it easier for them to finish school. Twenty-nine dropouts approved work-study programs, and 15 said such a program would have helped them stay in school.

Independent Study Programs

In the CSBA task force survey of school districts, 101 reported establishing opportunities for independent study; only 21 had not. Independent study can provide young people with stimulating out-of-the-classroom learning opportunities, conducted at their own pace in a manner that's most relevant to their future. It can be a means of bringing dropouts back to school as well as keeping very gifted and talented students from becoming bored with the system. But it should never be viewed as an easy way out for reluctant students — or as an easy means for districts to recoup lost ADA.

In 1979-80, independent study programs statewide enrolled some 14,000 students — up 239 percent from 1977-78. The auditor general found that at least 419 of the state's 1,102 districts and county offices of education now offer such programs.

In the 1979-80 school year, program students completed 64 percent of their written agreements. More than one-fifth either graduated from high school, passed the GED or CHSPE, or transferred to another educational program within their districts. What's perhaps most impressive is the fact that the majority of these students were truants and former dropouts — those who hadn't responded well to school programs in the past.

Independent study has been defined as "an alternative learning experience with instructional value equivalent to that of a regular classroom program." The crucial words here are "value equivalent to . . ."

Forms of Independent Study

Programs fall into two general categories:

1. "Center-based": These can be conducted from a separate

setting on campus (for example, in portable buildings or unused classrooms) or off-campus (perhaps in a commercial center offering work experience possibilities). They also can have a "community base"; this is a newer type of program which is offered jointly by the school board and non-education agencies such as probation or social welfare.

2. "School site based": This version is probably most used in elementary schools and small districts, where the number of participants is more limited. In the absence of full-time staff assignments for independent study, teachers and non-credentialed persons may volunteer (with or without pay) to take on additional duties required. A principal or other credentialed staffer should be appointed as independent study supervisor.

The possibilities for independent study are endless. Students have remodeled houses and cars; raised crops and animals; built canoes and piloted them down rivers. In Oakland, students in six English classes were assigned to various "All-City" projects, putting them in touch with such professionals as lawyers, judges and stockbrokers. Some compiled neighborhood profiles or conducted opinion polls; still others prepared "what to do" brochures to help community members cope with problems or "how it works" brochures on various community services.

Sample course outlines and individual student contracts are contained in the State Department/CCIS *Manual of Operational Procedures*. For a copy, write to the Child Welfare, Attendance and Safety Office, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools, 535 East Main Street, Ventura, CA 93009, (805)654-2747. The price is $7.50.

Student Needs Primary Concern

If your board wants to add or improve an independent study program, student needs should be your primary consideration. When carefully developed, staffed and monitored, such a program can meet the needs of students at all grade levels and in virtually all programs — including summer school and special education. Continuation and opportunity schools can have up to 10 percent of their students participating.

Among the students who can benefit are those who

- Lack a few credits to earn a diploma.
- Need special assistance to qualify for a general education diploma (GED) or pass the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE).
- Are anxious to enter "real life" and would prefer a course of

very specialized study and work experience during their final months of school.

- Want to finish school while developing or practicing a particular skill, such as Olympics-level athletics or professional dramatics.
- Are interested in pursuing a particular course (such as highly advanced mathematics) which no longer is offered at their home school.
- Are taking a weeks-long or months-long trip with their parents, and are willing to maintain a log and otherwise carry out planned learning activities during their travels.

Before adopting or updating an independent study policy, your board should identify the kinds of students it will potentially cover. Then ask yourselves the same question for each: "What guarantees that this will be a high-quality learning experience?"

There *are* ways of providing that guarantee, starting with a good understanding of the law — embodied in Education Code Sections 51745, 51746 and 48340, and in Chapter 15 of Division II of Part I, Title 5, California Administrative Code.

Written Contract Vital

Most important in any independent study program is the individual "written agreement" between the student, his or her parents and the teacher who will be supervising the project. It should be very specific as to

- Major objectives of the study project.
- Activities planned and materials to be used.
- Manner in which achievement of the objectives will be evaluated.
- Times and places that progress will be reported.
- Time requirements for completion of the objectives and of the entire contract.
- Description of methods for obtaining individual assistance.
- Tentative schedule of conferences between the student and supervising teacher.

In 1976, the Legislature made possible out-of-the-classroom, independent study by allowing teachers to have only "general supervision" rather than "immediate supervision" over a student. This enables paraprofessionals and volunteers (such as retired or currently-employed business people) to do the bulk of the direct work with a student.

Board Policy Prerequisite

What the law does *not* allow is for an independent study program to be implemented without written policies and procedures adopted

by the school board. For that reason, State Department of Education representatives have called board action "the prerequisite" to effective implementation.

To ensure community, parent and staff support, you may want to invite an advisory committee to work with you in drafting program guidelines. Samples of policies and procedures — as well as curriculum models and individual student contracts — are included in the 1981 *Manual of Operational Procedures and Curriculum Guide for Contract Independent Study.*

Other Necessary Components

Produced by the State Department of Education and California Consortium for Independent Study (with assistance from the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office), the *Manual* also outlines a number of components which practitioners consider necessary for success:

- Structured program — Students must understand that they are expected to perform their best work while under contract. A series of small, short-term activities (developed with the student's full participation) will make the young person feel less overwhelmed by the contract's magnitude.
- Detailed record-keeping — Students should report to a single person or office when they leave campus and return; your staff should know where and when students are working off the site. Where students have no campus schedule, they should be required to keep an appointment with their supervising teacher at least once a week. Traveling students should maintain a log and send periodic letters co-signed by their parents.
- Quality control — Financial support and pupil-audit ratios should be at least equivalent to those in the regular program. Criteria for program staff include strength in curriculum development, empathy toward underachieving students, creativity, flexibility in dealing with a wide range of students, a familiarity with community services, and a strong desire to be involved in the program (no one should ever be assigned to it against his or her will). One person is usually designated as program coordinator.
- Attendance accounting — For his or her school district to receive apportionment credit, a student must work on the project a minimum of four hours a day. Credit cannot be given for days when a student is *enrolled* in the program but is involved with it only two or three hours.
- Evaluation — Your board should receive a report on the program at least once a year. This might include information on

proficiency test passage rates for participating students; what happened to those leaving the program (did they graduate? what did they accomplish?); and types of students involved (low-achieving, high-achieving, etc.).

Subjective questionnaires also can be administered to current standards, former students, their parents and staff.

The Pitfalls

Perhaps partly because of the skyrocketing growth, the auditor general determined that reporting and monitoring procedures in independent study programs have been lax for several reasons:

- Districts had overclaimed ADA in 69 percent of the cases by not adhering to a 240-minute minimum day requirement. "Program supervisors sometimes based ADA claims on the days a student was enrolled in the program instead of the days the student worked," the auditors explained.
- Written agreements failed to include a clear statement of objectives, an adequate evaluation of the student's accomplishments, or the written approval of the student's parent or guardian in 39 percent of the cases.

If the purpose and scope of a student's independent study is inadequately defined, the student could become confused about his or her educational objectives and the district might have trouble evaluating performance and awarding credits, the state's auditors noted. In some cases, the auditors found that independent study supervisors are merely instructing students to "improve skills," to obtain basic skills in the area of general science, or to work on classes toward high school graduation. "None of these examples illustrates a detailed, verifiable statement of educational objectives."

Be sure that enrollment in independent study doesn't exceed your district's ability to provide all students with a true learning experience. In a study of 12 independent study programs statewide, the state auditor general's office found pupil-teacher ratios as high as 270:1. Experts recommend ratios similar to those in a district's regular program. A realistic ration ensures high staff morale, and the program's success depends on the dedication of the people in charge: when they are enthusiastic and motivated, they are highly successful in recruiting students.

Technical assistance can be obtained from: Lynn Hartzler, consultant. Curriculum and Support Services Division, State Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 556, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916)322-1048.

Other Alternatives

Other ways to improve choices for otherwise reluctant students include schools within a school, schools without walls, magnet schools, free schools, multicultural or bilingual schools, basic schools, open schools, and dropout centers. Some of these are discussed below.

School Within a School

- Learning in a Free Environment (LIFE) program at Bonita Vista High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District — Involving 150 young people and five instructors, this "school-within-a-school" required project students to take at least three courses within LIFE while maintaining some contact with the main campus. Students could serve as community service volunteers; combat vandalism by painting murals on buildings and in restrooms; replant bare spots on campus and raise money through ornamental horticulture; and participate in the planning and building of a 13-foot-high geodesic dome, among other things. A 10-student, one-teacher Judiciary Committee handled student discipline, with veto power by the project director and school principal.

The award-winning program was discontinued in 1981 after layoff procedures required the transfer of several project teachers. However, information is still available for other districts interested in replication or adaptation. Contact: David Knight, 751 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista, CA 92011, (714)421-0835.

LIFE students volunteer to clean up their community (Bonita Vista High School, Sweetwater UHSD).

• Open Learning Community at Del Rey Woods in the Monterey Peninsula USD — A 10-year-old "school-within-a-school," it voluntarily enrolls elementary-age children in an atmosphere described by the principal as "more laid-back" (flexible) than the regular program. Students are placed in three classes according to their grade: K-1, 2-3 or 4-6. They work individually or in small groups at their own ability levels, with an emphasis on parent involvement, creativity, balancing freedom with responsibility and open dialogue. Contact: principal Thomas Coyne, 1281 Plumas Ave., Seaside, CA 93955, (408)649-7305.

• Students Taking a Real Interest in Valuable Education (STRIVE) at Bell Junior High in the San Diego USD — Serving about 300 highly motivated students, this school-within-a-school directs personalized attention toward seventh, eighth and ninth graders who have a good citizenship record and good grades but aren't superior enough academically to qualify for gifted and talented classes. For information contact: vice principal Nancy Shelburne, 620 Briarwood Road, San Diego, CA 92117, (714)479-7111.

• "Crossroads" at Dana Hills High School in the Capistrano Unified School District — Students from throughout the CUSD apply to attend this school-within-a-school, which allows about 150-160 young people to undertake "an exercise in self-direction." They can embark on a seminar in an area of personal interest; work in some area of public interest, such as law or medicine; or exercise ROP opportunities. Four portable buildings are each staffed by a master teacher in a basic subject: math, English, science and social science. The teacher provides guidance and inspiration and helps students design individual learning plans suited to their own abilities and interests. A parent advisory committee ties the program to a community-based support system. Contact: Program Director Gerald Mays, Crossroads, 33333 Street of the Golden Lantern, Dana Point, CA 92629, (714)496-6666.

Magnet Schools

• Horizon High in the Kern UHSD — Located on the site of an old elementary school, Horizon gets 11th and 12th grade applicants from throughout the district. Its target group includes young people who display average or above average academic potential, but have poor attendance or otherwise appear unmotivated. The program is so popular that seats are filled by lottery. The 180-200 students have the options of a business-major and hands-on community involvement program. Each teacher is an 'advisor' to 18-20 selected students, and meets with them daily in a class called 'Interact' — for

which physical education credit is awarded. About 80-90 percent of the group goes on to college. Contact: Robert Amenta, director, 7115 Rosedale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93308, (805)589-4242.

• Lowell High School in the San Francisco USD — The oldest public high school in California, this college-preparatory institution enrolls 2900 youngsters with superior grades and entrance test scores. It boasts of the "finest advanced placement program" and the largest foreign language program of any high school in the nation. Contact: principal Alan Fibish, 1101 Eucalyptus Drive, San Francisco, CA 94132, (415)566-7900.

• San Andreas High School in the San Bernardino USD — A "continuation school" technically but with an "alternative" label, it serves only 11th and 12th grade students in the interest of providing a "more adult" environment. It offers only the very basic subjects, and then requires students to obtain the rest of their education from some other, occupationally oriented source — work experience, work experience exploration, Regional Occupation Programs, or vocational courses in adult school or community colleges. There are no "semesters"; students gain credits for each "production period" of work. (For each two productive periods in class, students have a chance to request homework leading to credit for another productive period.) Seventy-five productive periods amount to five semester units, allowing the young people to see major progress in just a short period. Students graduate throughout the year (the first mini-commencement ceremony in 1980-81 came in late October). Contact: principal Marvin Billings, 3232 E. Pacific Street, Highland, CA 92346, (714)862-5432.

Work Study

• Extended day programs at all seven campuses of the Fullerton UHSD — Held from 3:30-6:30 p.m., their classes give some flexibility to students who work during the regular school day. This is one of many alternatives offered to the dropouts actively recruited by special teams in the FUHSD. The program carries an "exemplary" designation under Title IV-C. Contact: Don Larsen, director, Project New Start, 780 Beachwood Ave, Fullerton, CA 92635, (714)738-3315. Also available are the New Start *Management Handbook* and companion *Recovery Team Manual* and *Evaluation Manual.*

• School for Business and Commerce in the San Francisco Unified School District — In close coordination with the business community, this school houses the district's Regional Occupational Center offering training, job placement and work experience. Contact: Evelyn Fitzgerald, Vocational Education Coodinator, 350

Broadway, San Francisco, CA 94109, (415)565-9600.

John O'Connell Vocational and Technical Institute in the San Francisco USD. This is more trade-oriented than the School for Business and Commerce, and has the staff working closely with the Central Labor Council. Airport repair is an example of the school's specialties. Contact: principal Alberto Aramendia, 2905 21st Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415)648-1326.

Basic Skills Programs

• Decision Center at Valley High School in the Escondido UHSD — Students with a history of behavior problems may be assigned to this new, separate program on the site of a continuation high school. They start the year with an hour-long, daily, 12-week course in decision-making skills, which project staff hopes will reduce alienation and improve performance in the rest of the curriculum. Basic skills instruction also is included in the program, which will operate from 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. each day. Funding comes from special education sources for the emotionally disturbed. Contact: Mike Salzano, EUHSD, 240 South Maple, Escondido, CA 92025, (714)747-3063.

Teenage Mothers

• School-Age Mothers Program at Wintersburg High School in the Huntington Beach UHSD — Each year, this allows about 45 young women to continue their education at a separate site until the end of the semester in which their babies are born. Much is done on an independent study basis, and a student can supplement her regular coursework with information on child care, prenatal care and conditioning. A nurse is available to answer the young mothers' questions. Contact: Lorraine Vallercamp, 17200 Goldenwest Street, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, (714)848-1774. (More on this type of special program is contained in Chapter 7.)

Opportunity Schools and Classes

• Long Beach Unified School District at the elementary and junior high and high school levels — Alternative for students with actual or potential attendance or behavior problems. Students are placed in a building away from the school site: In Long Beach, the opportunity school is housed in "storefront classrooms," so named because space is reserved for them in commercial centers. The aim is to return students to their original schools "as soon as is practicable"; to facilitate that goal, pupil progress is reviewed at least twice yearly. For information contact: William Hutton, Reid High School, 235 E. Eighth Street, Long Beach, CA 90813, (213)436-9931.

Chapter 7. Planning For Special Problems and Hard Core Truants

As you've learned through the previous pages, some of the "root causes" for non-attendance may be addressed simply by changes in the school environment and curriculum. Others, such as chronic illness, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse, may require a formal program all their own. Other students may continue to break school rules and present behavior and attendance problems that cannot be corrected by suspension or expulsion; these students can benefit, however, from alternative programs.

Special Problems

Chronic Illness

Perhaps because state funding formulas treat students' sick-days as if they were actually in class, districts tend to emphasize efforts to combat truancy rather than to reduce "excused" absence. *Both* are necessary components of any attendance plan.

Of course, no student should be in class when he or she is carrying a contagious disease. But there are many non-contagious diseases — such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and sickle cell anemia — which tend to keep students at home. Schools need to identify and give more support to students with such long-term health problems. Your nurses, for instance, can play a lead role in dealing with the problem not only by identifiying students but by arranging workshops for school staff. In fact, nurses can be a key part of any attendance improvement program, especially since the line between unexcused and excused absence is frequently blurred.

An experience at Ruth Grimes Elementary School in Colton shows just how important the nurse's role can be. Grimes' health services coordinator developed a multi-part program — assigning teachers to verify all absences with parents and develop individual attendance improvement plans for their classrooms. She also identified the students with 10 or more excused absences during the previous year; their parents were sent a letter offering assistance

with their child's health problems. By June, 61 percent of the targeted young people had improved their attendance rates.

Planning is essential also in cases where children absolutely can't come to school because of hospitalization, a contagious disease or injury. If they fall behind in their schooling during this period, they may later become discouraged — and their excused absences could quickly turn into unexcused absences.

The task force's school district survey identified three basic types of assistance:

1. Home teaching: a teacher will come to a student's home to either provide all instruction or direct the assignments planned by regular certificated staff.

2. Hospital teaching: a school staffer provides instruction in coordination with hospital nursing services.

3. Telephone teaching: a student can receive assignments and ask questions about those assignments daily via the telephone.

One comprehensive assistance program is offered in the San Francisco Unified School District. After receiving a doctor's verification that a student will be unable to attend school for at least six weeks, program staff will make assignments on the basis of the student's needs and circumstances. For example, the SFUSD will provide a telephone teacher rather than a home teacher in cases where the parent wouldn't be home during the visit. The district employs two fulltime telephone teachers, a fulltime hospital teacher and others on an hourly, as needed basis.

For information, contact Warren Crane at 1512 Golden Gate Avenue, Annex Building, Room 14, San Francisco, CA 94115, (415)824-1136.

Teenage Pregnancy

This is another area where school nurses can be involved. Statistics clearly show the need: Each year, more than 50,000 15- to 19-year-olds (and 800 under 15) give birth. Many drop out of school. Many may need education in prenatal care and child-rearing, as well as the opportunity to finish high school diploma requirements.

Dropout rates are high even within special programs for pregnant minors.

One report comes from Mary Lou Williams, teacher in the East San Gabriel Valley Teen Mother Program, following a survey of eight districts. The rate for young women leaving teen mother programs before delivery or dropping out of regular high school after delivery ran from 22 to 52 percent. Teachers in the program suggested that schools

1. Allow young mothers to continue their educations in a separate setting after delivery.
2. Set up procedures for the re-enrollment of students after they leave the pregnant minor program, so that one person at each site is accountable for follow-up.
3. Seek funds to create infant care centers on campus.

The San Bernardino Unified School District is one of those offering an on-campus child care center at its continuation high school. Its services are generally free to high school students; the staff consists of permit teachers and aides. Parents in the community also can leave their children there from 7:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., and are charged according to their ability to pay.

For information on the SBUSD program, contact Lupe Molner, coordinator, Child Development Center, 303 South K Street, San Bernardino, CA 92410, (714)885-7211.

An entire issue of the *California School Boards* journal was devoted to parenting education in September, 1979. This issue digests programs in Fresno, Elk Grove and other districts, as well as giving background information on funding sources, etc. To obtain a copy, write to CSBA Publications, 916-23rd Street, Sacramento, CA 95816.

Substance Abuse

Responses to the task force's survey of students showed that drugs and alcohol are underlying causes for student non-attendance. Sixty-five of 145 truants and 31 of 41 dropouts reported that they have been absent from class because of drug or alcohol use.

In Sacramento, the San Juan Unified School District is raising the level of community awareness. In the spring of 1980, it sponsored a student symposium on substance abuse, at which

Drawing by Chris Diermann, Gunn High School, Palo Alto USD.

students expressed concern that parents don't know enough about the drug scene. That revelation led to parent education workshops in April, 1981, featuring state and local experts and a nurse-assemblywoman as speakers.

Another community with specific ideas for drug prevention is the greater Cleveland region of Ohio. Sponsors of its Chemical Abuse Reduced by Education (CARE) suggest that a task force be formed in each school district, involving board members, mayors, police officers, clergy members, service clubs, medical professionals and others. Other CARE suggestions are to

1. Adopt a forthright policy to provide appropriate punishment for drug-related activity as well as treatment for such activity.

2. Don't limit the drug education curriculum to material on the consequences of chemical use and abuse; such programs should emphasize coping skills (how to say "no"); finding productive ways to deal with frustration, pain and anxiety; and building self-esteem.

Historically, districts have incorporated drug information into high school social science, health or driver's education courses, and may now be starting prevention programs in the elementary grades. This trend toward younger students parallels the movement of anti-truancy and dropout campaigns.

An overview of the programs for replication is contained in the handbook, *Better Schools, Better People*. Published in cooperation with the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, it's available through the State Department of Education's Publications Unit, 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814.

More information is available through an award-winning issue of the *California School Boards* journal (July/August, 1980). Write for a copy to CSBA Publications, 916-23rd Street, Sacramento, CA 95816.

Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion

There will be times when a student continues to break school rules. What *do* you do about those who consistently misbehave, without having them lose attendance and thus valuable learning time? Rather than suspending such students, some districts use Saturday school programs.

In considering such a program, keep in mind that it must be presented as a true "alternative" (since the law doesn't authorize districts to require weekend school attendance). Given the choice between it and a suspension, students (and their parents) may elect the opportunity for them to keep up with their classmates.

The Education Code (Section 49800) does not list truancy itself as one of the grounds for suspension; the Legislature stated its intent that "alternatives to suspension or expulsion be imposed against any pupil who is truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from assigned school activities." Some districts have implemented this section by adopting after-school programs for students with a certain number of absences and tardies.

Legal interpretations in this area differ, so it's particularly important that you consult with your own counsel before developing a program that removes students from the regular-day program. The attendance expert(s) in your county office of education also may be a helpful resource.

Alternative programs include PASS, SWAP, RAP, and juvenile intervention. Details of these follow:

- *PASS* — In September 1980, the Pasadena Unified School District implemented what it calls a Positive Attendance for Secondary Schools (PASS) program. Students with 10 truancies or tardies during a semester are removed from the regular program at Pasadena High School and assigned to a separate classroom from 1-5 p.m. each day. Readmittance can be gained through perfect, on-time attendance for 10 consecutive days; a second offense brings mandatory PASS participation for the rest of the semester. School officials say the program has cut truancy rates by two-thirds.

Another district using a version of PASS is the San Bernardino USD. Students with more than six truancies or tardies in any given period during the semester are assigned to special classes from 3-6 p.m. for at least five days. If a student is referred there again during the semester, the assignment will be longer. Teachers provide assignments and "a reasonable opportunity for (the student) the keep up with regular studies," but PASS students are not allowed to participate in any extra-curricular activities during their assignment period. They're returned to the regular program only after a conference has been held with their parents. (Parents have an opportunity to appeal their children's placement in the program.) If the youngsters fail to perform satisfactorily in PASS, they may be referred to continuation school.

- *SWAP* — The Orange USD has operated a Saturday Work Adjustment Program for eight years, after adapting it from the Anaheim Union High School District. Students who have been truant are allowed to either study in the library or work on school beautification projects.

In Orange, from 28-45 students participate each week. Their leaders are two regular staff members, carefully picked on the basis

of their ability to gain respect from and have a good rapport with young people.

Steven Ellish, administrative assistant for child welfare and attendance, says the cost of employing the staff members per week ($10 an hour for three years) is far exceeded by the gain. The district gets ADA money not only for these students, but from others they might otherwise have convinced to "cut" school and stay home with them in the absence of parents.

• *RAP* — This is the Santa Ana USD's version of an after-school program. As with PASS, students in the Remedial Attendance Program are denied participation in the regular academic program; instead, they must work on a prescribed reading, math and English curriculum from 3-6 p.m. Students with severe attendance problems may be referred there for a full semester.

The district also has a Saturday school for those caught fighting or misbehaving in other ways.

• *Juvenile Intervention* — Offered by the Morongo USD in conjunction with the local probation department, this serves students who appear headed for expulsion or students who have been expelled and might be ready for re-entry.

Students, their parents and school representatives sign a contract, which might call for families to see a counselor or the young persons to participate in a drug rehabilitation program. Parents might agree to visit their child's school, or the student might be assigned to perform a certain community service. Whatever the contract contains, progress with it will be monitored by the three counselors hired for the project.

For information, contact:

Pasadena — Peter Pappas, principal, Pasadena High School, 2925 East Sierra Madre Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107, (213)798-8901.

San Bernardino — Ralph O'Brien, administrator, educational services, SBUSD, 777 F St., San Bernardino, CA 92410, (714)381-1189.

Orange — Steven Ellish, OUSD, 370 North Glassell St., Orange, CA 92666, (714)997-6131.

Santa Ana — Humberto Lopez, director, Child Welfare and Attendance, SAUSD, 1629 South Center St., Santa Ana, CA 92704, (714)558-5501.

Morongo — Joan Burnside, director, Auxiliary Services, MUSD, P.O. Box 1209, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277, (714)367-9191.

Chapter 8. Involving the Community

"Truancy, while often seen as a problem of the schools alone, is actually a community problem. The unauthorized absence of students has a direct relation to daytime burglaries, vandalism, teenage drug abuse, and other problems which affect our community."

Project ALERT

Those words didn't come from a school newsletter. They were printed in a *community* newsletter called "Norwalk Now," and they exemplify the kind of recognition that has made possible Project ALERT, an acronym for A Local Effort to Reduce Truancy. Based in the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District, the effort is centered around a telephone hotline which allows community residents to anonymously report apparent truants.

When residents see a young person who should be in school but isn't, they can dial a special phone number connecting them with the school district attendance office. Trained personnel are stationed there to take the call immediately and send the message on to the appropriate authority. If the call is about a suspected truant at a private residence, the case will be referred to district child welfare and attendance staff for investigation. If it concerns a truant at a public place, the case will go to the sheriff's station. The station in turn will dispatch a deputy to return the truant to school.

At first, senior citizen volunteers were recruited to monitor the phone lines from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Staffing switched to regular district personnel after the six-month test period.

The number of calls about truants at a private residence more than doubled over the program's first six months: Students had clearly become "wise" to the hotline, and thus spent less time in public view. As for calls about young people at home during school hours, some have even led to new enrollment for NLMUSD: Motel managers have reported parents living in their buildings who haven't signed their children up for school.

On an average day, the school district will receive three to four tips — each one involving two or more truants. Among the callers are business people who find youth loitering around their stores. Previously, "many were reluctant to call the sheriff's station because

they would be asked to identify themselves," recalls Lucille Colln, school trustee and 1979-81 president of the Norwalk Coordinating Council (NCC).

The project was adopted officially by the NCC, which sent letters to various clubs, agencies and businesses in an attempt to solicit both moral and financial support. The City Council agreed to give $1000 in matching funds. Publicity, a key factor, included

- Feature articles in newspapers and the city newsletter, including a profile of a truant; law enforcement and educators' views on ALERT; and continuing progress reports.
- Presentation of a proclamation from the City Council declaring "Norwalk ALERT Month" to kick off the project.
- Establishment of an ALERT speaker's bureau to address community organizations.

Possibly the most effective device was the inclusion of a gummed sticker in an issue of the Norwalk community newsletter (mailed to 28,000 homes and businesses). Printed with the ALERT phone number as well as those of fire, sheriff and poison control stations, this bright red, white and black sticker fits conveniently on a resident's phone or address book.

For information, write to the Coordinating Council at P.O. Box 521, Norwalk, CA 90650.

Norwalk isn't the only place where non-school people are involved in attendance problems: School Attendance Review Boards (SARB), for instance, include members from local probation departments and other agencies. However, in many districts, this may be the full extent of community involvement. Of 125 districts responding to the task force survey, 92 identified some "specific means of working with local law enforcement or other community agencies"; few, however, referred to any activities other than SARB. These mentioned the loan of sheriff's deputies to campuses or adaptations of Operation-Stay-in-School (OSIS) programs.

Operation-Stay-In-School

Offered in the Los Angeles USD since 1974, OSIS programs are jointly sponsored by school districts and their local law enforcement agencies. In 1979, a version of OSIS was undertaken by the Fresno USD and Clovis USD; in January 1981, the Kern County Superintendent of Schools announced that the program would be launched in the greater Bakersfield area.

Generally, OSIS has police pick up truant youth and bring them to some kind of a reception center. In the Los Angeles USD, the

process works like this:

1. Apprehended youth are taken to one of seven centers staffed by a LAUSD pupil services counselor and attendance aide. After interviewing the student, the counselor and aide will contact the pupil's school and parents and ask them to return their child to the site. If the parent or student indicates that there are problems that call for further counseling, a referral will be made to the proper public or private agency.

2. The counselor assigned to the child's school will monitor future performance.

In its first four years, the program resulted in more than 36,000 truants being returned to classrooms. In 1975-76, only 505 of the 12,015 students interviewed had to be taken to the center a second time. The LAUSD calls it a "preventive, rather than punitive" approach.

For information contact: Evelyn Perkins, Pupil Services and Attendance, LAUSD, P.O. Box 3307 Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, CA 90051, (213)625-6952.

A Young Person's Viewpoint

The CSBA task force survey of students appears to lend support to the Operation-Stay-in-School concept.

Of 145 truants responding, 84 said they would come to school more if a police officer picked them up every time they were caught cutting class. Thirty-nine said they wouldn't come to school more, and nine didn't know.

Of the dropouts, 22 of 41 said they would have come to school more had a police officer picked them up for cutting. Four didn't know, and 11 said it wouldn't have had a positive effect.

The survey also showed that many of the students go to a private residence when truant. Among the dropouts, 10 said they had usually stayed home on the days they skipped school. Sixteen went to someone else's house; two worked; and six went somewhere on school grounds. Responses for the current students were similar. The largest number (50) stay home, while another 43 go to someone else's house. Five work, and 25 go somewhere on the school grounds. Other popular hang-out spots were hamburger stands, doughnut shops and other fast-food restaurants, shopping malls, "ditch canals," railroad tracks, pool halls, parks and food stores.

Sweep Program

The Pasadena USD has a different kind of program to make a team out of law enforcement and school agencies. Established in January 1981, it calls for local police officers to "sweep" the streets for truants three days a month. (Because the days vary, the students take a chance of being caught if they "cut" any time.) About 25-30 students are picked up on each "sweep" day.

School personnel are based at the police station on every sweep day to counsel the young people brought there. If parents can be reached, they are asked to return their children to school; if not, the youngster must remain at the station until the day's end.

For information contact: Williard Craft, Research and Evaluation Department, PUSD, 351 S. Hudson Ave, Pasadena, CA 91109, (213)795-6981.

Volunteer Programs

Another means of involving the community is with volunteer programs. For instance, the Vista USD has a wake-up service which calls interested students every school-day morning. The program, "Operation Quick Draw," is staffed by senior citizen volunteers recruited during luncheons at a nearby nutrition center.

Efforts were supported by the school board's declaration of attendance improvement as the district's primary goal for 1980-81.

For information, contact Gerrie Ryan at the Vista USD, 1234 Arcadia Avenue, Vista, CA 92083, (714)726-2179.

Like Vista, 46 of the districts responding to the task force survey had made use of volunteers for attendance programs. Others had not, largely because of a concern that it might violate confidentiality laws concerning students.

Some suggestions for using volunteers are to

- Make sure that home callers are properly in-serviced. They should understand that the information from a conversation is to be relayed only to appropriate school personnel. They should also know that their role is not to criticize parents for the student's non-attendance.
- Have volunteers disqualify themselves from calling parents they personally know. And if possible, assign callers to schools outside their area of residence.
- Consider using volunteers for duties other than phone-calling.

For example, have them help set up group "survival training" sessions between community professionals and parents.

Parent Education

The most critical segment of the community you must reach is the parents of the truants. In the task force's survey of students, responses indicated that parent education programs may be helpful in some cases: 30 of the students and seven of the dropouts had missed school because of being "kicked out of the house" by a parent or guardian. Stress between parent and teenager can cause some youth to drop out of school, turn to drugs, and even "act out" inner hostility.

One district that has offered parenting programs is Corona-Norco Unified in Orange County. In the spring of 1981, parents could attend a one-night workshop series on four topics: motivating student attendance and achievement; winning children over; building a child's self-concept; and helping children to face family crises. These were held on six different dates at various schools. Also featured were a nine-week program on the improvement of parent-child relations and a six-week seminar on stepparenting.

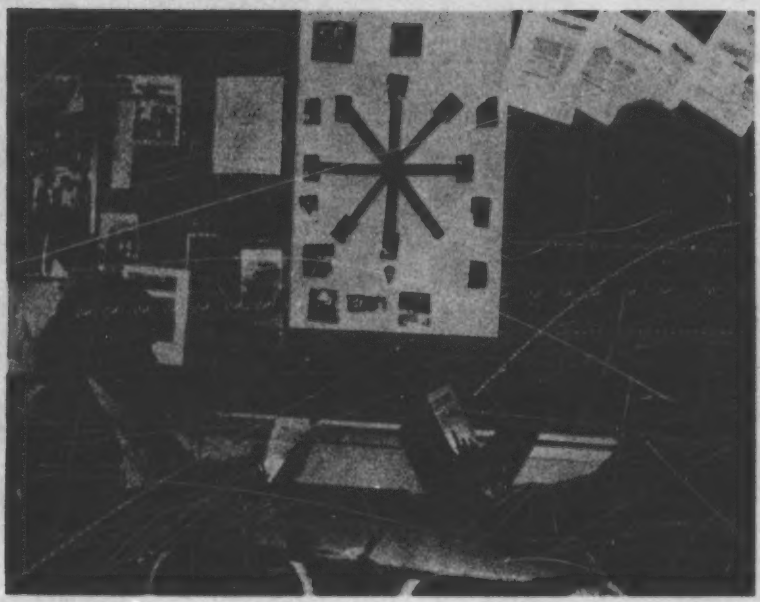
For information contact: the Division of Educational Services, Corona-Norco USD, 300 Buena Vista Avenue, Corona, CA 91720, (714)736-3301.

Adopt A School

Because truancy *is* a community problem, don't immediately reject a possible attendance-motivating plan solely because of an apparent lack of financial resources. You can ask other agencies, service clubs, or businesses to fund a particular endeavor. (It helps, of course, if they are also involved in an advisory committee of task force concerned with that endeavor) or, you can seek ongoing funding for a variety of projects through such approaches as Adopt-a-School.

The Los Angeles and Oakland Unified School Districts are two that encourage businesses and industries to "adopt" a school of their choice. Businesses can offer contributions in a variety of ways, many of which make school seem more relevant to youth. Los Angeles emphasizes "human resources" donations rather than financial ones; in Oakland, a business can give from its treasury instead or in addition to its time.

At Oakland's Castlemont High School, the Clorox Corporation



In Oakland's Adopt-A-School Program, Clorox sponsors activities at Castlemont High School.

pays the director's salary for a project serving about 100 low-achieving students. They're given special materials and special remedial assistance, along with incentives (such as records and radios) for perfect attendance. Students are presented with their awards at Clorox's corporate headquarters.

The Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation paid for a reading laboratory at Oakland High School. Participants were pre- and post-tested, and the ones who improved the most were given entry-level summer jobs with Kaiser. The company also

- Set up a "Summer on the Move" employment program, with an educational component by the University of California.
- Gave its engineers released time to teach advanced math at the school site.
- Hosted student trips to its heralded research laboratory.
- Sponsored a speakers' bureau made up of employees who talk to classes about careers.

Not all Adopt-a-School arrangements are as comprehensive as these. They can be as small as at one Oakland site, where a bookstore provides its "adopted" school library with the sample

books received from publishers, as well as discounts and bookmarks to encourage pleasure reading.

All in all, Oakland has successfully put 30 of its 90 schools up for adoption.

Los Angeles has 84 companies serving 93 schools. White Point Elementary, the "adoptee" of Marineland, has the amusement park's employees lecture students in marine biology. At other sites, Frances Ford Coppla Studios gives apprenticeships in film production to 30 students. The Bendix Corporation staffs a math remediation laboratory. And the L.A. Dodgers counsel students to stay in school, stress perserverance, and caution against drug abuse.

Such adoption programs can help alleviate underlying causes of truancy and dropout problems: boredom with school, drug and alcohol use, academic problems, and the uncertain link between students' education and job future. A business or industry adopting a school could also fund such direct attendance-improvement mechanisms as a truancy hotline or prizes for students.

Your local Chamber of Commerce may be able to help you find businesses that will participate in the Adopt-a-School program.

For information on Oakland's program, contact Barbara Whitman at the Community Relations Office, 1025 Second Avenue, Oakland, CA 94606, (415)836-8284. About Los Angeles' program, contact Eiko Mariyama, P.O. Box 3307, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, CA 90051, (213)625-6673.

Community Schools

Although Adopt-a-School may seem like the ultimate in community involvement, community education may deserve the label even more because it turns the public school into a "community center" offering educational, recreational, health care, cultural and other services to all neighborhood residents. With support from other government and community-based organizations, the buildings are open all evening, all week, all year. California now has 225 such schools in operation.

Implementation requires the hiring of a community school director for the site. He or she recruits volunteers, makes unused classrooms available to community organizations, and asks those organizations to offer services at the site. One example is Mathson Community School in the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District, where

- Families can come for emergency food, clothing and help with utility bills.

- Walls are adorned with murals to raise cultural pride and reduce vandalism.
- An unusually high number of cultural assemblies, recreational programs, and college and career exploration programs are offered.
- Music, art, sports and other classes are offered to the community at large.
- County preschool and information/referral services are housed.
- Space is allocated for a community garden.
- Federally funded breakfast/lunch programs serve 300-500 people per day.
- A community-based organization runs a program allowing dropouts to develop painting and other artistic skills while working toward a return to school or their GED certificates.

The program improves attendance in two ways: First, the school houses community agencies that can help to arrest underlying student problems; second, its community-school director visits the families of poor school-attenders and tries to interest them in the outside activities offered. Parent/school interaction improves along with student choices — and both are generally considered to be good attendance motivators.

An effective community school director will attract resources to the site far exceeding the cost of his or her salary. For instance, Mathson's director secured some $265,000 in in-kind contributions for the summer of 1981 alone.

For more information, you can contact one of four community education centers in California. Located in county offices of education, these are headed by
Santa Clara — David Aikman, (408)299-4379
Santa Barbara — Bill Cirone, (805)963-8654
San Diego — Bruce Braciszewski, (714)292-3685
Los Angeles — Joel Scott, (213)933-6538

Other Sources

You don't *have* to start a community school in order to use existing community-based programs. Your board can initiate and maintain contact with the many ethnic, anti-poverty and other groups which operate programs specifically geared to dropouts or potential dropouts.

For example, the Inland Area Urban League operates a "Project Work" to turn around the behavior and attitudes of "hard core,

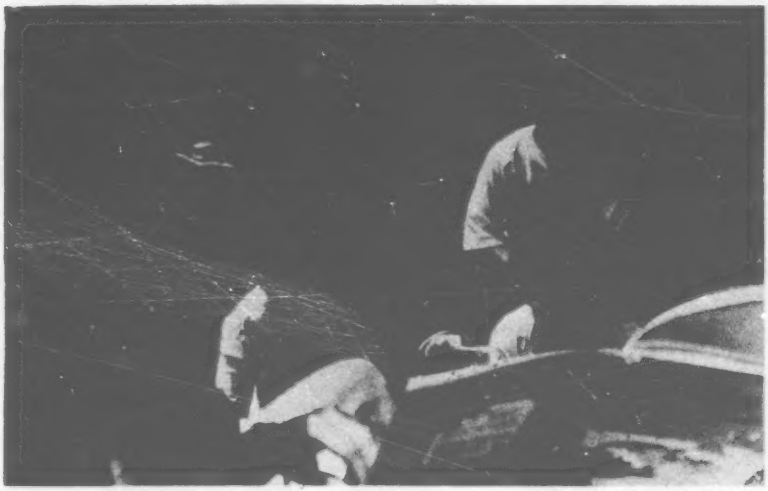
disinterested youth." School authorities refer students who are low achievers, lack motivation and self-esteem, exhibit some degree of hostility or show other signs of being potential dropouts. Recognized as a resourse of "last resort," Project Work will soon be offered to 7th- and 8th-grade students as well as those in the 9th and 10th grades.

The students attend a one to one-and-a-half hour workshop three times a week with the goal of improving their self-images. After an environment of trust and support is established within the group, the students hear guest speakers and receive direct assistance on such subjects as career awareness, personal care, and budgeting and other economic education topics.

Funded fully by the City of San Bernardino, the project pays participating students a stipend of $16.92 every other week. The incentive many well have worked: of the 20 participants in 1980-81, 15 showed both grade point and attendance improvements.

The Urban League is now applying for foundation funding and is interesting in extending the project to cities outside San Bernardino. For information, contact Sabrina Avant or Barbara Shelton at 498 West Court Street, San Bernardino, CA 92410, (714)884-8291.

Parent volunteer reads to children in the Reading From A Yellow Chair program at Lauderbach Community School (Chula Vista).



Chapter 9.
Using Review Boards and Teams

In 1975, state legislators built a structure around the concept of community involvement in solving attendance problems. They mandated that each county have a School Attendance Review Board (SARB), which brings together representatives of various community agencies to hear individual truancy cases. When traditional resources fail, students are referred to SARB by district attendance staff or others designated by the board of education. SARB then meets with the students and their parents in an attempt to provide some guidance.

And the result? The task force's survey exposed widely varying opinions of SARB's effectiveness. They were described by one school representative as "a hoax"; another commented that his district's own SARB has been "extremely effective." The difference? Those having success cited a variety of factors: early intervention, follow-up, localization, a diverse SARB membership, and community awareness.

Presently, community awareness of the SARB may be minimal. That certainly appears to be the case among students: of the 186 responding to the task force survey, only 38 claimed to know what a SARB is. Only 22 said they had gone before such a board, even though the vast majority likely could have qualified for SARB intervention.

SARB Actions

Some SARBs clearly are more active than others. Yet all have the same basic structure. By law, each board must be constituted (at minimum) by one parent and one representative from the school district, the county probation department, county welfare department and county schools office. Some common SARB actions include

- Suggesting changes in a student's learning program.
- Arranging for tutoring or changes in teacher assignment.
- Helping students find employment.
- Directing students and/or their families to counseling services.
- Facilitating transfers to a different school.
- Requesting assistance from other city and county agencies.
- Coordinating assistance from volunteers to ensure students get to school.
- Recommending the establishment of new resources.

Does your SARB do all these things?

Localizing Effort

Some school boards and staff have found that a county-wide SARB is simply too far removed from the site level to serve a preventative role. So, they have established district-level SARBs which refer cases to the county attendance board only when their own efforts fail.

There's also a movement toward the establishment of site-level mini-boards — generally called "School Attendance Review Teams" or "SARTs." In 1976, principals at all 90 of Oakland's schools were required by board policy to start and maintain an active SART. At the elementary level, these are comprised of the school nurse, psychologist, area pupil services consultant, a parent, teacher and social worker. Secondary-level SARTs are led by the head counselor, with the assistant principal, school psychologist, nurse, a parent, probation officer, social worker and perhaps a student (a former truant) as members.

The SART's focus is on counseling and referral. Oakland has two district-level SARBs (divided by attendance area) to take on larger responsibilities — such as requesting a juvenile court petition as a last resort.

For more information, contact: Tom Tryon, Pupil Personnel Services, OUSD, 1025 Second Avenue, Portable Bldg. No. 15, Oakland, CA 94616, (415)836-8200.

Another means of decentralization has been planned by the San Leandro Unified School District. It calls for the SLUSD and a neighboring district that's comparatively poor in human services resources — the San Lorenzo USD — to share one SARB. The board will conduct a community-wide awareness plan and serve as the umbrella organization for the SARTs planned for every school site — elementary included.

The plan's author, San Leandro child welfare and attendance officer Lee Lundberg, likes it because those closest to the school (the SART members) will be doing the "prescriptive work and follow-up." A multi-district model may also increase the productivity of SARB representatives, who'll have just one set of meetings on which to focus their attention. Other components of the program are to be parent education, daily attendance tracking, staff in-service training, extra tutoring and flexible school programming.

An individual performance contract would be drawn up between a student, his or her parent and the SART as soon as the student expressed "school phobia" or other signs of potential non-

attendance. The main cost of the program is expected to be the training of parents to serve on the site-level teams.

For information, contact: Lee Lundberg, 14735 Juniper Street, SLUSD, San Leandro, CA 94579, (415)577-3001.

Elementary Focus

If your district can't afford to set up a SART at every school, you might consider a "mobile SARB"-type model, as used in the San Bernardino USD. This serves only elementary school children, on the assumption that their cases would otherwise be overshadowed by the "more critical" truancy referrals at the secondary level. Prevention is emphasized.

In the San Bernardino USD, membership on the "mobile SARB" includes the probation, social services and mental health departments, which wouldn't be able to supply a representative for every school site. The body meets in various areas of the city in such places as libraries or the YMCA. A district spokesperson finds that non-school locations tend to make parents feel more comfortable.

For information contact: Janet Paule, 777 "F" Street, SBUSD, San Bernardino, CA 92410, (714)381-1293.

San Bernardino was hardly the first to recognize the importance of early intervention. In 1979, the New York City Schools issued a report emphasizing how dropouts have a history of failure in school — and that the older the troubled student, the less the chances will be to turn that record around. Some districts are beginning to incorporate such findings into their strategies; in a 1980 survey of Los Angeles County SARBs, more than two-thirds said they planned to focus more on elementary referrals in the following year.

The Long Beach USD has a specific means of helping poor-attenders at the elementary level develop a solid academic record. Its district-level SARB coordinates a pool of volunteers to tutor referred elementary students in 30-45 minute sessions, several days a week. The model may eventually be adopted at the high school level as well.

For information, contact: Roy Womack, director, attendance services, LBUSD, 255 East 8th Street, Long Beach, CA 90813, (213)436-9931.

The Rowland Unified School District also has a model which focuses special attention on the elementary level. Together with the nearby Walnut Valley USD, it shares an unusually active SARB; in 1979-80, nearly 1,000 referrals were received. (Only four boards in

Los Angeles County had more than 100.)

Backing for the SARB comes from a school board-adopted "code of conduct" for student attendance. After school-site staffs were given this go-ahead to make attendance a priority, they increased teacher calls to parents and follow-up by principals. They also began keeping a monthly absence record for each student, and procedures were streamlined to facilitate SARB referrals.

To see more youngsters in the elementary grades, the two-district SARB holds meetings with groups of 20-40 parents. Sharon Robison, Rowland's administrator of instruction, says attendance at these sessions is good — perhaps because they are held so early in a student's school experience, before parents feel discouraged or embarassed. The board has a parent chairperson and several parent members; Robison says the resulting parent-to-parent communication helps to improve the climate at group meetings.

At the end of each school year, staffs can request official letters from SARB for all students who had 10 or more absences. These also are designed to review the consequences of poor attendance (including that caused by "excused" absences).

For information, contact: Sharon Robison, RUSD, 1830 Nogales St., Rowland Heights, CA 91748, (213)965-2541.

Ideas For Improvement

Other ideas for improving SARBs include

1. Minutes of board meetings should be sent to school trustees, and school trustees should attend SARB meetings to develop better understanding.

2. The most effective chairperson might be the parent representative or other "neutral" party, who's not tied to the philosophy of any particular agency and may have more time to devote to the task. Or, consider rotating the chairperson's seat around the board.

3. Many community-based organizations have a special interest in students' gaining a complete education. Try to involve them in SARB, if only as non-voting members. The San Bernardino USD has formed a Community Services Team made up of psychologists, sheriffs, mental health experts and others who don't serve on SARB. The latter body will arrange appointments for a student to meet with the CST in his or her home school.

4. Some school districts have a policy outlining specific steps to be taken with each unexcused absence, including eventual referral to SARB. One of them is the Saddleback Valley USD, which explains the policy to students at the beginning of the school year and to parents through newsletters, conferences and "Open House."

Saddleback's "6-12-18" point" referral system makes a student subject to a SARB hearing with the third truancy finding. Conferences with the dean, counselors and attendance officers are mandated in previous steps.

5. Some SARBs have guidance and counseling agency representatives as members, or at least stay in close contact with them. Consider enlisting their help to carry out SARB-sponsored parenting workshops.

Funding Under SB 90

Some state dollars are available for county and district-level SARBs to carry out their basic activities. The source is SB 90 of 1973, which allows local governments to be reimbursed for the state-mandated costs which fall under specific "parameters and guidelines" set by the state Board of Control. For SARBs, the allowable costs are those for notifying parents and pupils; county superintendents' SARB-related consultant services; travel expenses to SARB hearings; and the pro-rated salaries of SARB representatives and support personnel. The total for the fiscal year must amount to at least $201 to constitute a valid claim.

There is one catch, however: the procedure for funding the claims has been slow. It was not until the 1981-82 budget year that local reimbursement was provided for SARBs. From now on (if the Legislature and governor wish to continue the appropriations), districts and counties can file for reimbursement each fall — by October 31 — for their *estimated, current-year* SARB-related costs. At the same time, they are to declare any differences between the actual and estimated costs for the previous year: adjustments in the state payments will be made accordingly.

For a copy of the parameters and guidelines, write to the Accounting Division, State Controller's Office, P.O. Box 1019, Sacramento, CA 95805. Or, call Glen Beatie of that office at (916)322-2794.

Of course, no matter how well-funded (or well-intentioned) your SARB is, its counseling efforts might not work for all students. Some cases may require back-up from the judicial system. In the past, that "back-up" hasn't always existed; SARBs could seek a petition to bring an unresponsive habitual truant to juvenile court, but their requests often were dismissed. In addition, district attorneys often have failed to prosecute parents for not sending their children to school.

SB 3269 Strengthens SARBs

Partly to satisfy complaints about SARBs being "powerless," the Legislature passed AB 3269 by Assemblyman Gary Hart. This legislation

- Allows a SARB to require the pupil or his/her parents to furnish evidence of participation in those services.
- Requires the juvenile court to hear all evidence on the request for a petition regarding a truant.
- Requires the SARB to submit documentation of its efforts to the juvenile court as well as recommendations on what action the court should take.
- Authorizes SARBs to direct school districts to file criminal complaints against parents who continually and willfully fail to respond to SARB directives.
- Raises the allowable fines against parents to $100 for a first violation and $250 for a second violation. (In lieu of a fine, the judge can order attendance at a parent education or counseling session.)
- States that parent fines must be credited to the school district in which the offense was committed. This money is to help support SARB activities and parent counseling sessions.

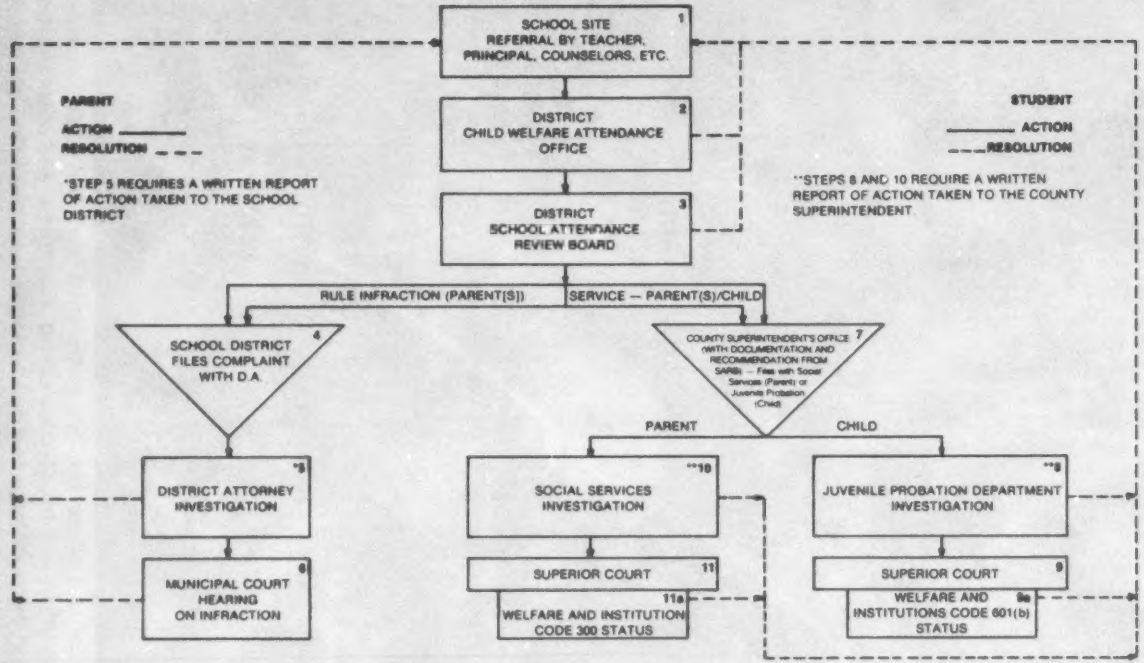
Maintain Interagency Communication

You should understand all the "last resort" possibilities the law provides for truants and their parents. Stay in communication with the parties who will be offering the enforcement; you might arrange a "summit meeting" with juvenile court judges and district attorneys. At least one of the state's school districts even has a district attorney representative on its SARB.

The Los Angeles USD has assigned a liaison to improve communication with one area juvenile court. At the judge's request, a meeting was arranged between the school board president, central office staff, faculty members, students, area administrators, and representatives from law enforcement and related public and private agencies. It led to the appointment of a pupil services and attendance counselor (who also happened to be an attorney and former elementary teacher) to maintain communications with the court.

Publicized cooperation with the courts and the district attorney's office will help to orient community thinking toward the importance of good attendance. This necessarily includes support for the enforcement of compulsory attendance laws, but it also includes a strong effort — through counseling, incentives, and other means — to bring the pupil back to a good attendance pattern well before court action is considered. SARB can be an integral part of that effort.

SARB Referral Flow Chart



Developed by the Alameda County SARB, this chart outlines the legal processes which can be used for enforcement of compulsory attendance laws. While the initial steps may differ (many districts, for example, don't have their own SARB and must refer cases to the county level), it does show the basic path from SARB to the district attorney's office, juvenile court and superior court.

1. *Site Referral.* When a student exhibits a behavior problem — truancy, for example — the school site staff (teachers, dean, principal) will attempt to solve the problem. If they cannot do so, a referral is made to the supervisor of the child welfare/attendance (CWA) office.

2. *District Child Welfare/Attendance Office.* The CWA will investigate. He/she may counsel the student and parent(s), and may recommend a school transfer, community services, etc. If the CWA is unable to resolve the problem, he/she will refer the matter to the District SARB. The parent(s) will be notified if they are required to appear (Education Code Section 48263).

3. *The District School Attendance Review Board (SARB).* The SARB will conduct a hearing to which the parent(s) and student are invited, and may make recommendations to the parent and/or student. If the SARB believes that the problem lies with the parents' refusal to meet their responsibilities as parents, the SARB may require the School District to file a complaint against the parents. (Welfare and Institutions Code 601.2.)

4. If referred by the District SARB, the school district shall file a complaint against the parent(s) with the district attorney's office.

5. *District Attorney (DA)* will investigate the matter. The DA will meet with the parent(s) and may charge the parent with an infraction in the municipal court.

NOTE A: The district attorney will notify the district in writing of the action taken.

6. *Municipal Court* will adjudicate the matter.

NOTE B: In the event that the SARB (3) believes that the student needs services that the parent(s) cannot provide, the SARB may refer with documentation and recommendation to the county superintendent.

7. *County Superintendent of Schools* shall file an application requesting a petition on behalf of the student with the probation department.

8. *Probation Department.* The deputy probation officer will investigate the matter, and determine whether the student is a status offender as defined by the Welfare and Institution Code Section 601(b). If so, the probation officer may file a petition to that effect with the superior court.

9. *Superior Court* will adjudicate the matter.

9a. *Court Imposed Status*

NOTE C: The probation officer will notify the county superintendent in writing of the action taken.

NOTE D: Alternatively, the county superintendent of schools may, at the District SARB's direction, file an investigation request with the Social Services Agency (SSA).

10. *Social Services Agency.* SSA will investigate and determine whether the student is a dependent minor as defined by the Welfare and Institution Code Section 300. If so, SSA may file a petition to that effect with the superior court.

NOTE E: The Social Services Agency will notify the County superintendent in writing of the action taken.

11. *Superior Court* will adjudicate the matter.

11a. *Court Imposed Status.*

Part 3.
Case Studies

Chapter 1. Using School Improvement For Attendance Improvement

In the Riverside Unified School District, the staff at John W. North High School involves the School Improvement Program (SIP) in combating truancy and other absenteeism. When its site council conducted a needs assessment in 1979, it learned that teachers viewed poor attendance as the school's No. 1 problem. To turn the situation around, the council assigned an "Attendance and Discipline Committee" to develop a comprehensive plan.

Early Attendance Improvement Efforts

First, the committee developed a set of site-level attendance guidelines for the approval of the SIP executive council, school staff and the district office. Among other things, the guidelines spell out 15 steps to be taken for each unapproved absence — including period absences. The 15 steps were publicized in a one-page summary of "School Behavior Policies" sent to students' homes each fall with registration materials. The sheet includes space for the students *and* their parents to signify that they "have read and understand" the policies. The family is then to forward the original to the school and retain a carbon copy for reference.

Further communications with parents are fostered through the school newsletter and student newspaper.

The school also provided for

- Familiarizing staff with the guidelines through in-service training.
- Granting released time to teacher volunteers to regularly phone parents of absent students.
- Implementing a positive reinforcement program, which has teachers consciously recognize behavioral improvements through comments on report cards, conversations with students, phone calls and notes sent home to parents.

A computer terminal was installed on campus to compile a daily list of full-day and period absences. Each month, computerized letters are mailed to parents' places of employment to report their children's individual attendance and tardiness records.

The program is not without its problems. The original computer program package had to be replaced, and staff was still reporting inaccuracies months after its implementation. Still, the new atten-

dance policy was rated negatively by less than 13 percent of the parents responding to a SIP survey in February 1981. The majority of students in a separate survey also evaluated it favorably. And the teachers? Before the computer system became fully operational in April 1980, they demonstrated their commitment to the new attendance policy when they devoted at least an hour a day to hand-checking attendance reports for possible problems in their classes.

Improving the School Climate

At the same time these direct attendance-improvement efforts were undertaken, the SIP council initiated steps to improve the total school climate. Some of these have been identified as attendance motivators:

1. Making school seem much more relevant to students — A Vocational Career Committee was charged with reviewing and updating materials for a career center. It is also to develop a handbook relating school subjects to possible occupations; co-ordinate two college information nights for students and parents; and set up a speaker's bureau for on-campus career and vocational presentations throughout the year. Teen-employment openings in Riverside are posted on a bulletin board.

2. Helping incoming students make the transition to high school — Counselors hold orientation programs at North's feeder middle schools to familarize students with courses and registration procedures. In May, eighth graders and their parents are invited to a second evening session on the high school grounds. This treats them to a tour of the campus, dinner for a small charge, school band performances, and an orientation especially for parents. Directly following is ninth grade registration, which parents are urged to attend.

New freshmen also are welcomed in May with a "Husky Pride Day," featuring displays and information about the clubs and activities offered at North. Other components of the school's "Ninth Grade Adjustment Program" are

- An orientation week called Success Through Attitude-Relationships Training (START). Teachers present five two-hour sessions on the subjects of decision-making and discussion skills; adolescent development; health and nutrition; relationships with peers and parents; management of conflicts and feelings; study skills; and out-of-classroom activities.
- A "pen pal" and peer advisor program between ninth graders in a personal psychology class and older students in such classes as sociology and advanced psychology. The latter students also serve as guides for new students in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades.

- The identification of 80 students at the middle school level who might have problems in high school. Upon their arrival at North, they were involved in small-group counseling sessions and scheduled individually into helpful classes such as personal psychology.
- Making available three classrooms and special activities for ninth-grade students during the lunch hours.
- The designation of one student as the "outstanding freshman" in each department during the first three-quarters of the year. This award is based not only on academic accomplishment but on punctuality and attendance.

Results Positive

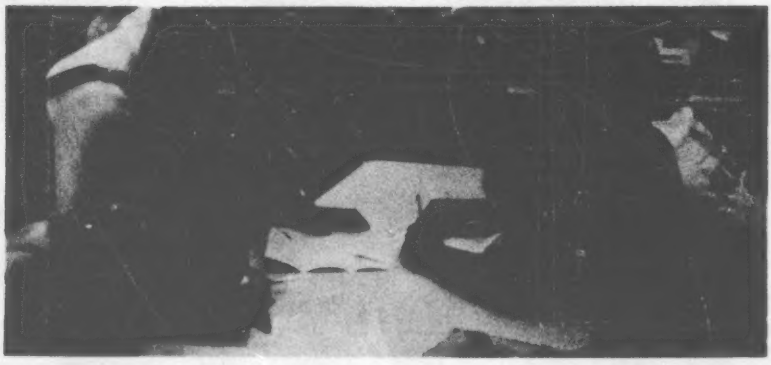
The overall program was designed to prompt at least 88 percent of the freshmen to qualify for 10th grade status, up from 83.5 in 1978. In 1980, the goal was almost met — with 87.7 percent achieving promotion.

As for tardy and absentee rates, the school hadn't yet figured percentage decreases at the time of this writing. However, it does point to its student and parent evaluations of the new step-by-step remedial guidelines as a measure of success. Even among the 31 percent of students who rated the guidelines negatively, there are positive implications: "Effective implementation . . . could be expected to evoke (a negative) response from those students who deviate from the rules," a district evaluator said.

One student expressed the effect first-hand: "I don't like the Attendance Policy. I can't ditch any classes."

For information contact Bonnie Rose, Categorical Program Specialist, North High School, 1550 Third Street, Riverside, CA 92507, (714)788-7311.

During Husky Pride Day newcomers sign up for clubs and activities.



Chapter 2. An Elementary Emphasis That Works

The experience of the Lancaster School District (K-8) proves that non-attendance problems aren't confined to high schools. Located in Los Angeles County, Lancaster offers educational programs no higher than the eighth grade. Between 1977-78 and 1979-80, the district reduced unexcused absences from 11,503 to 9,905 and excused absence days from 63,427 to 55,939. In 1980-81, the district reported a further 138-day decrease in unexcused absences and a 2,544 drop in excused absence days. Overall absence rates from 1979-80 were 0.2 percent lower in the district and 1.35 percent lower at the kindergarten level specifically.

Six-Year Study

The district treats all absences "in much the same way, realizing that most absences affect students in a negative manner," says a 1980 report by Irene Burkey, then its director of pupil personnel services. Titled "What Happens When Kids Don't Go to School," Burkey's report summarized a six-year study of attendance statistics. From 1974-75 to 1979-80, the district lost $421,000 because of unexcused absence. And according to the standardized academic tests, the student missing 25 or more days of school achieves, "on the average, from eight percent to 25 percent below the average student," Burkey pointed out.

Her report indicates that without the district's positive approach, the impact would have been much greater. Over the six years of study, the number of students absent 25 days or more per year fell from 548 (eight percent) to 351 (5.7 percent).

Nine Steps to Improvement

Lancaster's cure included nine steps:

1. Early identification to enable counseling parents of frequently absent students about the importance of attendance, beginning at the kindergarten level.

2. A positive approach to make the child feel he or she was missed when absent, and the parent feel that school is of upmost importance.

3. Parent contact as soon as an irregular attendance pattern is established to make parents feel a part of the team.

4. Educational alternatives including an "opportunity program" to help seventh and eighth graders who are not adjusting to the regular academic program. This emphasized career awareness, problem solving and life skills.

5. Use of School Attendance Review Boards as a tool for intervention, with meetings often held at the school site, to involve staff in the process.

6. Awareness on the part of principals and teachers to help them develop a natural commitment toward solving attendance problems.

7. School district office/site-level communication and program monitoring to include frequent written and verbal communication, and an organized procedure to "ensure continuity."

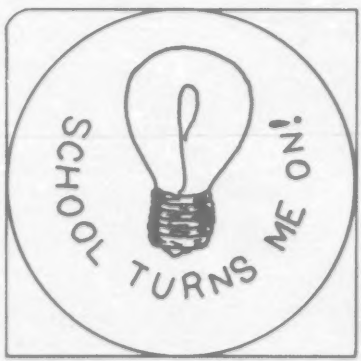
8. Taking the time to develop credibility with community agencies to enlist them to help meet children's special needs.

9. Support and commitment from top management and the board of trustees to clarify that attendance improvement is in fact a priority.

The district has added new components to its attendance improvement program every year, says Steve Gocke of the pupil personnel office. It's now examining the possibilities for further educational alternatives and adding new clerical staff for attendance monitoring; plans are underway to computerize attendance records.

Awareness and Reinforcement

The district office staff flags individual attendance records when a student is missing for, say, three days a month on the average. It also checks for weekly or monthly incidences of unexcused absence.



One of Lancaster's "Spirit" buttons.

Referrals to the regional School Attendance Review Board are made for students as young as five and six. Since parents often feel that attendance isn't as important in kindergarten as in later grades, SARB tries to make kindergarten parents realize that poor attendance patterns start early and are greatly affected by parent attitudes.

In addition, the district plan includes

- Perpetual flags passed each month to the school (and classes within a school) that have the best attendance records. Teachers supply other incentives to students who have considerably improved their attendance. Honorary certificates are given at all schools.
- Inservice training sessions, conducted by district and county schools staff, to emphasize not only attendance procedures but the positive effect of good attendance on the entire academic program (and how teachers can promote it).
- Parental awareness through orientation meetings, individual conferences, radio announcements, and newsletters. A speakers' bureau now being developed will have SARB as one of it's topics.
- Monthly student reminders, such as flyers with catchy slogans about attendance for students to color.

Gocke says the idea that improved attendance will improve educational quality is one of the most important to foster among students, parents and staffs. "We like to say that our programs are so good, our kids can't afford to miss them."

For further information, contact Steve Gocke, director, pupil personnel, LESD, P.O. Box 1750, Lancaster, CA 93539, (805)948-4661.

One of Lancaster's "Spirit" buttons.

Chapter 3.
Pajaro Promises Prevention

Of the myriad attendance-improvement programs that have been tried in California, the best known may be "Helping to Overcome Learner Dropouts," otherwise known as Project HOLD. Originated by the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, it's aimed at increasing students' self-esteem and academic success to keep potential dropouts enrolled. The emphasis is on prescriptive guidance at the secondary level.

The entire program can be adopted through Title IV-C funds or the Pajaro Valley USD will sell the necessary materials to those who want to adopt the program unofficially. Workshops on the various project components have been held for small groups in locations around the state.

Here's what HOLD involves:

1. The early identification of potential dropouts (before they come to high school). Factors considered are grades, reading scores, interest in school, parent attitude, self-esteem, participation in school activities, and attendance. If these are inadequate, a "treatment strategy" is developed for the student.

2. Targeted students are assigned a "teacher advocate," who encourages them to attend after-school events and directs them to other forms of assistance.

3. "Classroom counselors," principally college interns, community agency representatives or citizen volunteers, monitor the student's attendance and arrange meetings between the adults involved in individual programs. They also discuss grades and attitudes with the students.

4. Additional helpers are "peer counselors," students who participate in the program as part of a formal class. Students are allowed in the class if they have demonstrated responsibility, exemplary behavior and a willingness to "share themselves." These criteria are more important than academic performance.

5. Attendance is carefully monitored according to a procedural handbook. Students with perfect attendance for three weeks and nine weeks get a certificate, which project staff says has proven to

be a true incentive. As one program participant puts it: "Many of these kids hadn't received an award since elementary school."

6. Parents of the potential dropouts are invited to two types of meetings: informational (about school options, events, starting and closing dates, etc.) and parent-effectiveness (a counseling session).

Ninety percent of the participating parents described these services as "helpful." Other statistics showed that participating students 1) completed high school at a rate of 71 percent; 2) earned 66 percent more units than a comparison group; 3) moved out of the bottom quartile on a self-esteem inventory at a rate of 75 percent; 4) increased their participation in school activities by 300 percent; and 5) scored an impressive 22 percent higher academically.

For information contact: Joan Stoker, Project Director, P.O. Box 630, Watsonville, CA 95076.

"The schools must provide opportunities so that each student finds at least one 'claim to fame' — something that makes him feel good about himself."

A school representative

Appendix

Reponses To the Task Force's Student Survey

1. Currently Enrolled Students (145 Total)	Yes	No	Don't Know or Don't Remember
Does it hurt your grades when you don't come to class?	96	33	12
Do you think you'd learn more if you went to school all the time you were supposed to?	86	39	19
Do you *want* to graduate from high school?	127	8	8
Do you *plan* to graduate from high school?	109	12	20
Has there been any time when you couldn't come to school because you had to stay home and babysit?	37	107	1
Has there been any time when you couldn't come to school because you had to work?	39	100	2
Have you ever not come to school because you were afraid of being beaten or robbed?	11	103	2
Would more kids come to school or go to their classes if the schools were made safer?	23	88	24
Have you ever stayed home from school because you didn't have the right clothes to wear?	38	104	2
Have you ever not gone to class because you were drinking or using drugs?	65	76	1
Have you ever not come to school because you were kicked out of the house by your father, mother or guardian?	30	109	2
One school has set up separate campuses at big companies where lots of teenagers work. The teenagers go to school for a			

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Don't Remember
couple of hours every day right after their shift ends. Is this a good idea?	93	23	17
Would it help you?	70	43	11
Would you come to school more if you knew that a teacher or counselor there really cared about whether or not you got an education and would give you special help?	82	43	19
Would it make any difference to you if someone your own age, who you really looked up to, really encouraged you to go to school?	66	54	22
Does your mother or father (or guardian) care if you come to school or not?	126	10	3
Do you think your mother or father would care more about your schooling if they talked a lot to your teachers or your counselors?	86	39	19
Would you come to school more if your mother or father (or guardian) was called every time you cut a class?	81	51	13
Would you come to school more if your mother or father got a letter every time you cut a class?	68	62	12
Would you come to school more if you knew that a cop would pick you up every time he caught you cutting?	84	39	9
Do you know what a School Attendance Review Board (or "SARB") is?	34	108	
A SARB is a group of people (like probation officers and counselors) who meet with kids to talk about why they cut school. Have you ever had to go before a SARB?	18	111	1
Do you know it's against the law for you to cut school?	105	29	
Would it be easier for you to graduate if you could get credit for doing work at home, instead of having to come to class?	86	48	7

2. Students Who "Dropped Out" (41 total)	Yes	No	Don't Know or Don't Remember
When you didn't come to class, did it hurt your grades?	25	10	3
Do you think you'd have a better life if you finished high school?	20	13	6
Are you sorry you dropped out?	13	22	4
When you were going to school, was there any time when you couldn't come to class because you had to stay home and babysit?	8	30	1
Was there any time you couldn't come to class because you had to work?	7	33	1
Did you ever not come to school or go to class because you were afraid of being beaten up or robbed?	3	35	
Would more kids come to school or go to all their classes if the schools were made safer?	7	24	9
Did you ever stay home from school because you didn't think you had the right clothes to wear?	8	31	
Have you ever not gone to class because you were drinking or using drugs?	31	8	
Have you ever not come to school because you were kicked out of the house by your father, mother or guardian?	7	31	1
Is there anything the schools could have done to keep you from dropping out?	23	14	
One school has set up separate campuses at big companies where lots of teenagers work. The teenagers go to school for a couple of hours after their shift ends. Is this a good idea?	29	5	5
Would it have helped you?	15	14	7
Would it have made any difference to you if someone your own age, who you really looked up to, encouraged you to go to school?	12	19	8

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Don't Remember
Would you have stayed in school if you knew you could get special help from a teacher or counselor there, who really cared about whether or not you got an education?	16	13	7
Did your mother or father care when you dropped out?	25	8	4
Do you think your mother or father (or guardian) would have cared more about your schooling if they had talked a lot to your teachers and counselors?	17	13	8
Would you have come to school more if your mother or father (or guardian) was called every time you cut a class?	9	18	10
Would you have come to school more if your mother or father (or guardian) got a letter every time you cut a class?	7	17	8
Would you have come to class more if you knew that a cop would pick you up every time he caught you cutting?	22	11	4
Do you know what a School Attendance Review Board ("SARB") is?	4	26	
A SARB is a group of people (like probation officers and counselors) who meet with kids to talk about why they cut school. Did you ever have to go before a SARB?	4	28	2
Did you know it was against the law for you not to be in school?	26	11	
Do you think you will go back to school someday and get your diploma?	20	10	8
Do you think you might have graduated if you had gotten credit for doing work at home instead of having to come to school?	14	10	4

"If friends came to school more, it would help."

A student

Bibliography

1. *Attendance and Absenteeism in California Schools*, Office of the Auditor General (Report P-832), March 1979.

2. *A Compendium of Character Education Programs in California Public Schools*, Senate Select Committee on Innovations in School Finance and Character Education, California Legislature, January 1981 (A limited number of copies were provided to county offices of education).

3. *Improved Administration and Accounting Needed in Independent Study Programs*, Office of the Auditor General (Report P-033), April 1981.

4. *Lost in the Shuffle, A Report on the Guidance System in California Secondary Schools*, Open Road Citizen's Policy Center, 1323 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, 1979.

5. *School Dropouts, A Discussion Paper*, C. Catherine Camp, et al, California Legislature, Assembly Office of Research, May 1980.